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INTO THE GAP: A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF
ACCULTURATION, STRESS, AND REFUGEE FAMILY FUNCTIONING

by

Kieu Anh T. Do

A DISSERTATION

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Major: Human Sciences
(Child, Youth and Family Studies)

Under the Supervision of Professor Yan R. Xia

Lincoln, Nebraska

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INTO THE GAP: A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF
ACCULTURATION, STRESS, AND REFUGEE FAMILY FUNCTIONING

Kieu Anh T. Do, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2016

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Every day, new waves of refugees result from increasing social, political and environmental instabilities around the world. Numerous studies have detailed the various stressors and adjustment issues that refugees face when resettled in a new host society. The majority of these studies focus on individual-level variables and not on the family as a whole. Thus, more studies are needed to understand how refugee families adjust in the resettlement context in order to promote positive outcomes. Studies that have examined family-level functioning often focus on how acculturative differences increase stress in refugee families, contributing to higher levels of familial tension and conflict. This is referred to as the *acculturation gap-distress hypothesis*. However, these adverse effects have not been found consistently. The purpose of this dyadic, mixed methods study is to address the limitations in the literature by testing the acculturation gap-distress hypothesis, and to explore the relationship between acculturation, stress and refugee family functioning.

Survey results of this study did not provide support for the acculturation gap-distress hypothesis. Perceived stress did not mediate the relationship between acculturation gaps and family functioning. Qualitative findings supported the notion that acculturation changes across the life course. Most tension and stress occurred during the early part of resettlement, when children were younger. As children and parents adjust to

the host society, they learn and accept their differences and recognize these differences as strengths. These results and findings have important implications for service providers and resettlement agencies in establishing services that are crucial to the long-term adjustment of refugee families.

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“It takes a village...” was how I began my application letter to graduate school. Now that I have arrived at the finish line, I can say I have truly experienced the essence of this statement. I could not have made this journey alone. My deepest gratitude to everyone who are part of ‘my village’. My sincere thanks to my advisor, Dr. Yan Xia, for taking me under her wings when I was an inexperienced student, the first in my family to attend college, and not fully understanding graduate school. She opened my eyes to the world and always encouraged me to view everything through a larger, more global perspective. I am extremely grateful for the countless hours Dr. Xia spent helping me through both academic and personal issues. She had gone above and beyond her role as a mentor, opening opportunities for her students that they never imagined possible. Secondly, I want to thank my co-advisor, Dr. Maria de Guzman, for her continuous support throughout graduate school and for exposing me to the world of Extension. She taught me how to translate and bring research from the university to the community. Through their caring support, guidance, and warm encouragement, Dr. Xia and Dr. de Guzman helped to shape me into a scholar and a researcher. I strive to carry forth their legacy of endearing mentorship in my own career. I also want to thank my committee members, Dr. Julia Torquati and Dr. Beth Doll, for their time and valuable feedback throughout this whole process. Their perspectives have been considered in these revisions and are much appreciated for the depth it has added to this dissertation.

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With Much Love and Gratitude,
Anh.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The challenges of our globalized society are no longer confined within a particular geographic border. Political, religious, environmental and economic instabilities in one area have far-reaching consequences around the globe. Every day, people in over 120 countries are displaced from their homes and are forced to seek refuge elsewhere (UNHCR, 2011). The situation has grown more complex over the years. In addition to political issues, the rise of international development projects, such as the building of dams and deforestation, often displace large numbers of people. Individuals and families who are caught in the middle of these conflicts and who become refugees can attest to the urgency of human displacement.

Currently, there are over 10.4 million classified refugees around the world, with an additional 15.5 million who are internally displaced (IDPs), and 3.5 million stateless persons (UNHCR, 2012). The majority of refugees come from Asia and the Pacific (3.3 million), Africa (2.6 million), the Middle East (1.6 million), and Europe (1.5 million) (UNHCR, 2012). Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia are the top three sending countries, generating over half of all refugees since 2008. As of 2011, Pakistan has been hosting the largest number of the world's refugees (1.7 million), while the U.S. ranked 10th, hosting around 8% of the total refugee population.

Defining 'Refugee'

Refugee is a political and legal term, whose definition has shifted over time. People within this population have been known by different names, such as exiles, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, expellees, forced migrants, nonconformists, and many

more. They left their countries of origin for different reasons, ranging from political conflict, religious war, environmental disaster and a whole host of other precipitating events.

Refugee migration is not a new phenomenon. It has existed as long as wars and crises have existed throughout human history. However, defining refugee has only gained importance in contemporary times, with increasing need to establish criteria for humanitarian assistance, and to decide who is allowed to cross certain national borders. The first official definition of refugee was established in the early 20th century, when conflicts between many European nations were heightened. During this time, several governmental bodies convened to discuss the massive flight of people crossing their borders (Simpson, 1939). Governmental protection and national identity were used as criteria to define a refugee in those days. For example, between 1921 and 1922, a Russian refugee was defined as “any person of Russian origin who does not enjoy or who no longer enjoys the protection of the government of the U.S.S.R. and who has not acquired another nationality” (Simpson, 1939, p. 2). A similar definition was applied to German refugees who were escaping Nazi Germany.

Current conventions follow the definition set by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), formerly known as the League of Nations. The first United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees convened in 1951 to formalize the definition, which gave refugee status to individuals affected by events occurring before 1951 and within Europe. In 1967, the UN convened again to broaden the definition by removing the temporal and geographical restriction to include universal

coverage. This definition is still being used today. According to Article 1 of the UNHCR Protocol, the term “refugee” is applied to any person who:

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

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Refugee is a unique population immersed in the context of instability and change. As a group, they face multiple pre- and post-migratory stressors that affect their well-being and quality of life. Prior to arrival in the receiving countries, refugees often experience high levels of trauma, such as torture and assault, witnessing violence and death (Blair, 2000; Cummings, Sull, Davis & Worley, 2011). As a result, they often exhibit high levels of psychological problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005).

Once resettled, refugees may also encounter numerous challenges, such as meeting basic needs (Cohon, 1981), unemployment (Rees & Pease, 2006), and other adjustment difficulties (Gans, 2009). As a result, research shows that refugees tend to exhibit high levels of distress that increase the risk of depression, suicide, substance use and family violence (Blair, 2001; Franz, 2003; Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping & Goldman, 2002).

As an institution, family is highly valued among many refugee groups, because it is ingrained within their cultural traditions, grounding their identity and serving as a supportive network (Rousseau, Rufagari, Bagilishya, & Measham, 2004; Weine et al., 2004). Scholars and researchers have observed, “family members tend to perceive the consequences of political violence through a family lens” (Weine, Vojvoda, Hartman, & Hyman, 1997; Weine et al., 2004, p. 148). However, few studies have examined family outcomes or family-level coping and adjustment within refugee populations. Studies of individual pathologies currently dominate refugee research, with several annotated bibliographies, and over 500 pages of references dedicated to such topics (Montemurro, Lavelle, & Mollica, 2004; Peterson, Deinard, & List, 1989; Williams, 1986). Therefore, more study is needed to examine how stress affects individual outcomes as well as refugee family functioning.

In research concerning refugee families, acculturation is one of the most salient stressors. Acculturation is the process of change that occurs through prolonged contact or interaction between two or more cultural groups (Berry, 1989; Williams & Berry, 1991). Conflict often arises as family members adapt to the host culture at different rates (Birman, 2006; Rick & Forward, 1992; Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines & Aranalde, 1978). The increased conflict is conceptualized as the *acculturation gap-distress hypothesis* (Lau et al., 2005; Lee, Choe, Kim & Ngo, 2000) or the *acculturation disparity hypothesis* (Tardif & Geva, 2006). These hypotheses refer to the discordant family relationships that result from differences in acculturation, especially between parents and their children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993).

The existing literature suggest some common factors that influence the acculturation gaps between parents and their children, such as length of residence (Gil & Vega, 1996) and educational levels (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). However, studies of both immigrant and refugee populations show less consistent findings about the effects of the acculturation gaps. Some found that the gap adversely affects both individual and family outcomes. For example, acculturation differences between family members are associated with high levels of psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, lower life satisfaction (Yoon et al., 2013) and lower self-esteem (Gil & Vega, 1996). Acculturation gaps also negatively impact parent-child communication (Buki, Ma, Strom & Strom, 2003) and reduce supportive parenting (Weaver & Kim, 2008). Other studies have not found this negative association (Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Lau et al., 2005). Thus, understanding how these acculturation gaps shape family adjustment will require further research.

The study of acculturation has additional relevance to resettlement policies. In many receiving nations, one of the primary goals of resettlement programs is to assist refugees in integrating into the mainstream society. The conceptual framework which defines core domains of integration, as proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) refer to social bonds (e.g. with family, friends, community) as mediators of the integration process. According to the authors, family closeness enhances the resettlement experience. However, few studies examine the specific processes of family and social ties. Understanding the acculturation in refugee families will help shed light on how these micro-processes can be applied to larger integration processes at the community and society level.

In terms of sampling, existing studies often survey specific family members, such as mothers, fathers or children, separately. Few studies sample multiple family members within one single design. Some progress has been made in obtaining multiple perspectives from different family members, such as the FAMCORT project (Weine et al., 2004, 2005) and others (Detzner et al., 2009). More research is needed to enhance existing knowledge of the key processes shaping refugee family adjustment. Studying the refugee phenomenon using a family-focused approach is in-line with how participants view their experiences and provide a better understanding of how life adversities affect social relationships. Examining these family system changes has important implications for planning services and for conducting intervention, which is more comprehensive and able to address the multiple challenges that refugee families encounter.

Methodologically, existing refugee research uses either quantitative or qualitative design. There are few mixed methods studies that utilize both framework, and fewer still which employ a dyadic design to examine the perspective of multiple family members at the same time. These types of studies are needed to provide a holistic understanding while examining specific relationships and exploring the underlying processes (Zetter, 2012).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dyadic, mixed methods study is to address the gap in the literature by examining the acculturation gap-distress hypothesis and by exploring the relationship between acculturation, stress and refugee family functioning. Specifically, this study utilizes an embedded design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), where qualitative data collection and analysis are conducted within a larger quantitative framework. The

overall aim of the quantitative survey is to examine the relationship of the acculturation gap between parents and their children, their levels of perceived stress and their report of family functioning. The intent of the smaller qualitative interview is to understand participants' experiences relating to these three areas in order to improve and enhance the interpretation of the numerical relationship. This study addresses four specific research questions. First, it examines factors that predict the gap in acculturation between parents and children. Of these factors, length of residence and parents' and children's level of education are examined in closer details. The second research question investigates the relationship between acculturation gaps, perceived stress and family functioning. The third question explores parents' and children's perception of the survey and of their life experiences. The fourth question focuses on the integration of the survey data and qualitative interviews.

Quantitative research questions.

- **Question 1:** What are the relationships between the length of residence and educational levels on the acculturation gaps between parents and children?
- **Question 2:** What are the relationships between acculturation gaps, perceived stress and family functioning?

Qualitative research question.

- **Question 3:** What do the participants think about the survey and the three topics relating to acculturation, stress and family functioning?

Mixed methods research question.

- **Question 4:** How do the qualitative findings enhance understanding of the survey results?

Rationale for the Dyadic Mixed Methods Design

In order to answer the research questions, a dyadic, mixed methods approach is used. Family phenomena are complex and required study from multiple perspectives. Dyadic design allows researchers to tap into this complexity by collecting data from different members within the same family and to explore the interactional influences between them (Kenny, Kashy & Cook, 2006; Wittenborn, Dolbin-MacNab & Keiley, 2013). Furthermore, a mixed method design allows the researcher to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data using rigorous procedures, and to combine the two types of data to form a comprehensive understand of the topic of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 5). The rationale for mixing both types of data in this study is that neither the quantitative nor the qualitative data alone is sufficient to answer questions about the outcomes or their underlying processes. Quantitative research can provide an understanding of the relationships that exist between variables, and qualitative research can provide the stories and details grounded in the participants' experiences. Using both approaches within one study also helps to capitalize on the strengths and to offset the weaknesses associated with each method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Bryman, 2006). Mixed method is well suited for this study because it can be used "to add breadth and depth to extant understanding of family" and "to illuminate phenomena...that are not captured using a singular approach" (Shepard, Orsi, Mahon & Carroll, 2002, p. 337).

Theoretical Perspectives

Ecological Systems Theory. Upon arrival in the host country, refugees interact with many systems, including social, service, legal, governmental, and cultural systems. For this reason, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is a suitable framework for understanding the refugee experience. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1986, 1994), human development is shaped by proximal processes between the active person and the context in which s/he lives. The *form, power, content, and direction* of the effects of these processes on development depend on the characteristic of the person, the environment and the outcomes being examined (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The developing person is embedded in multiple contexts, which are conceptualized as concentric circles nested within each other. The innermost environment or circle that is closest to the developing person is the micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1994). It consists of the family, peers, teachers and other individuals who have direct contact with the developing person. Next is the mesosystem. It is the connection between different microsystems, such as the relationship between parents and teachers. The next level is the exosystem, which is the connection between mesosystems, one of which does not include the developing person. Spanning outward is the macrosystem, encompassing larger social, political and cultural contexts that also have important influences on a person's development. In later versions of his theory, Bronfenbrenner (1994) also added a fifth dimension called the chronosystem, describing the time factor affecting human development, such as historical events or other generational effects. Taken together, the theory specifies that human development is a function of the person, process, context, and time.

Ecological Systems Theory also facilitates the selection of variables for this study. Perceived stress is a person-level variable, assessing the extent to which each member of the dyad experience life events that are beyond their control and cause great distress. Likewise, family functioning is within the microsystem, at the family-level of influence. Acculturation, on the other hand, is part of the macro-system relating to the interactions between different cultural values, beliefs and practices.

Strengths-based perspective. Additionally, a strength-based perspective also guides this study and serves as the interpretive lens by focusing on what people do well, instead of focusing on their deficits. Strength-based research arose during the 1960s. Pioneers of this field include Herbert Otto (1962, 1963), Nick Stinnett, David Olson and John DeFrain, and their colleagues (Olson & DeFrain, 1994; Olson & McCubbin, 1983; Stinnett, Chesser & DeFrain, 1979). A focus on strengths is much needed in refugee research, because while the field has grown tremendously, the framework has remained largely the same. Refugee research has its beginning in examining the “refugee problem”, which sought to deal with the large influx of refugees from regions of war and conflict. It is now moving towards addressing the “problems refugees experience” once they arrived in host countries. Utilizing a strength-based research approach helps us move beyond these old paradigms.

The family strengths perspective has been used to study families from around the world, from Greece (Kaldi-Koulikidou, 2007) and China (Xie, DeFrain, Meredith & Combs, 1996) to Africa (Koshen, 2007) and the U.S. (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). It has also been used to examine various ethnic (Abbott & Meredith, 1988; Littlejohn-Blake & Darlin, 1993; Stinnett, Sanders, DeFrain & Parkhurst, 1982) and immigrant families

(Dalla, DeFrain, Johnson & Abbott, 2009; Usita & Blieszner, 2002; Xia, Xie & Zhou, 2005).

Based on their work with international families, Nick Stinnett, John DeFrain and their colleagues in the International Family Strengths Network (IFSN) (DeFrain & Asay, 2007) developed the International Family Strengths Model, which consist of six core strengths: a) appreciation and affection, b) commitment, c) positive communication, d) enjoyable time together, e) spiritual well-being, and f) managing stress and crisis effectively. For example, strong families respect differences within each of its members and care about their well-being. They have developed constructive ways to share their feelings and make compromises in their day-to-day activities. They make an effort to spend quality time together and share in their faith, compassion and hope. They are adaptable, with the capacity to face challenges and to become resilient. According to the model (DeFrain & Asay, 2007), the family is the basic unit of society and contains an amazing array of diversity. At the core of these strong families are strong marriages. The basic assumption is that while all families face challenges, they all have strengths as well. These strengths develop over time and often in response to challenges.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Following is a summary of the literature, highlighting current knowledge on refugee family functioning after resettlement. The summary consists of a brief overview of how measures of family functioning. Various stressors faced by refugees and their influences on family functioning are examined, as well as, a discussion of the acculturation challenges that affect refugee family functioning.

Refugee Family Functioning Post-Resettlement

Refugee migration affects families in profound ways. Family functioning is defined in many different ways, and across different domains. Some examples include the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, Sprenkle & Russell, 1979), the McMaster Model of Family Functioning (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978) and the Beavers Systems Model of Family Functioning (Beavers & Hampson, 2000).

The current study utilizes the definition of family functioning as described by the Process Model of Family Functioning (Steinhauer, Santa-Barbara & Skinner, 1984). Family functioning is characterized by seven domains under this model, and include a) task accomplishment, b) role performance, c) involvement, d) communication, e) affective expression, f) control, and g) values and norms (Skinner, Steinhauer & Sitarenios, 2000). A successful or strong family is one who is able to meet certain developmental *tasks* for its members. These tasks and the criteria for success are evaluated based on the family's *values and norms*. In general, the achievement of the developmental tasks is accomplished through well-defined *roles* and effective *communication* with positive *affective expression* and *involvement* of family members, as

well as, having an appropriate degree of *control* or predictability within the family (Skinner et al., 2000).

Stress and Family Functioning

The dynamic process of resettlement brings both stress and strength to family systems. Precipitating events prior to migration play a role in changing family life; however, post-migration factors have significant influence on family functioning in the resettlement context. Research shows that post-migratory stressors are prevalent among refugees. For example, Blair (2001) found that the Cambodian refugees in his study report an average of 14 “very stressful” stressors during their first year of resettlement. Basic needs and practical concerns (Cohon, 1981), along with issues of economic and downward mobility (Gans, 2009) are often cited. Unemployment rates are moderately high, ranging from 12.2% to 77% (Bach & Carroll-Sequin, 1986; Waxman, 2001). Additionally, underemployment and downward mobility is common, as refugees are unable to find comparable work for their training and skills. Some of this downward mobility begin prior to migration because of war and political changes, but these losses remain difficult to address even after resettlement in receiving countries.

Furthermore, unemployment and loss of occupational status influence individual and family functioning. For example, male unemployment rates are associated strongly with reported levels of dissatisfaction, family conflict and domestic violence among different groups of refugees in Australia (Rees & Pease, 2006). Unemployment and underemployment also predict depression, suicide, substance use and family violence among Bosnian refugees (Franz, 2003). Occupational downward mobility may cause stress in these areas of life by reducing one’s social position in society and standards of

living, as well as personal autonomy, control and self-respect (Gans, 2009). Qualitative studies also highlighted feelings of isolation and lack of social support (Miller et al., 2002).

Acculturation and Family Functioning

Acculturation is a major source of change for many families as refugees set roots in new cultural contexts. Acculturation research often highlight the friction and conflict that occur with shifts in beliefs, values, behaviors and identity; however, acculturation also has the potential for positive influences as well (Chance, 1965; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006). The impact of acculturation is felt most strongly in families, when different members adjust to the host culture at different rates. The different rates of cultural change in attitudes, beliefs, language, and identity are called the acculturation gap (Phinney, Ong & Madden, 2000; Telzer, 2010). Generally, younger refugee and immigrant children tend to acculturate more rapidly than their parents and older family members (Birman, 2006; Rick & Forward, 1992; Szapocznik et al., 1978). This often leads to intergenerational conflicts relating to decision-making, traditional behavior in families, and issues regarding their elders and traditional customs (Phinney et al., 2000).

However, higher acculturation is not always associated with more intergenerational conflict. Rick and Forward (1992) found that the relationship between acculturation and perceived intergenerational differences is moderated by the number of years the youth spend in U.S. schools. More specifically, acculturation only increases intergenerational differences for youth who spend *fewer* years in schools. The differences decreased when youth spent more years in U.S. schools. The authors attribute this trend to the emphasis of education among refugee parents. By encouraging their

children to stay in school rather than enter early traditional marriages, these parents lessen the tension and conflict in their family relationships. Education is also a form of human capital within the refugee community, facilitating adaptation through the acquisition of host society's language (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

Furthermore, Lazarevic, Wiley and Pleck (2012) also measured the acculturation gap effects on family atmosphere and quality time spent with parents. The researchers assessed the acculturation of Serbian young adult refugees to the host culture as well as their cultural heritage. Results obtained are similar to those found by Rick and Forward (1992). In general, Serbian young adults perceive themselves as being more acculturated to American culture than their parents. This gap in American acculturation contributes to negative family atmosphere and decrease quality time with parents.

These studies utilized adolescents' and young adults' reports of their parent acculturation level. The negative effects of acculturation on family relationships become even more complicated when examined through multiple respondents across different domains. For example, Merali (2004) examine the acculturation status and intergenerational gaps in Hispanic refugee parent-adolescent dyads. Consistent with previous findings, parents report lower behavioral acculturation than adolescents did. Furthermore, parents and adolescents are often unaware of and misjudge the acculturation gap between them, which potentially contributes to family conflict arising from misinterpretation of various behaviors. For example, parents may view adolescent acculturated behaviors as disrespectful, and adolescents may view their parents' behaviors as controlling.

Birman, Trickett and Vinokurov (2006) studied the gap in acculturation of Soviet Jewish refugee families to both the host culture and the native culture. The researchers compared parent-child dyads across three specific domains, a) language, b) behavior, and c) identity. Contrary to existing assumptions, it is the gap in the native Russian language competency that cause the most tension and conflicts within these families, and not the gap in the host language.

Using the same framework, Ho and Birman (2010) tested these variables with first-generation Vietnamese adolescents and their parents. The adolescents were either born in Vietnam or in refugee camps and have been living in the U.S. an average of 8.2 years. The researchers examined the family atmosphere in addition to the three acculturation domains of language, identity and behavior. Replicating previous findings, the researchers found that at the group level, parents are more oriented to Vietnamese culture than their children across the three domains. On the other hand, the adolescent children are more American acculturated than their parents. However, at the individual family-level, they observed a reverse pattern. For example, parents in a third of the families identify more strongly with American culture than their children. Meanwhile, children in a quarter of the families report higher Vietnamese identity and behavioral acculturation than their parents. The researchers suggest that this might be attributed to the age of adolescence where preserving ethnic pride may be an important part of their identity development. The study also shows that acculturation might differ across different domains. For example, some of the Vietnamese parents indicate a strong American identity but show low English language competency. Ho and Birman (2010) conclude that this might be due to the socio-historical context of migration, in that

Vietnamese parents may be more aligned with American ideologies and political perspective because of America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Across these studies, the effects of acculturation on family functioning show some inconsistencies. In Birman et al.'s (2006) study, the gap in the American identity acculturation creates the most conflict and disagreement between parents and adolescents. On the contrary, other studies found that the gap in heritage cultural identity between parents and their adolescent has more of an influence on family cohesion and satisfaction. For example, Lau et al. (2005) found that problematic youth behaviors and outcomes occur in families where youth strongly identify with the heritage culture than their parents. The authors caution the interpretation of directionality, because youth from families with low cohesion and satisfaction may be less likely to want to embrace their cultural roots. These findings show that the acculturation gap is more complex than previously assumed.

Summary

In summary, the literature review show that refugee families often face many challenges in the post-migratory context. These stress and strains have a deep impact on refugee functioning and well-being (Montemurro et al., 2004; Fazel et al., 2005). However, there is limited information about how these factors influence family processes and adjustment. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) is an appropriate theoretical framework, calling for the need to examine multiple levels of influence. At the cultural level, there is evidence that acculturative stress is a major source of contention within refugee families. At the family level, family functioning is examined through the perspective of the parent-child dyads, and at the individual level, perceived

stress is measured. The current study seeks to address these issues by examining how various levels of perceived stress and acculturation gaps affect family functioning. This is necessary in order to replicate and advance understanding of the refugee resettlement process in particular, and family stress and coping in general.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Embedded Mixed Methods Design

The current study utilize an embedded design, encompassing a smaller qualitative study within the larger quantitative framework, denoted as QUAN(qual) (Figure 1) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Morse, 2008). The embedded design is suitable for studies where supplemental data is needed to improve the larger design. Within this study, more priority is given to the QUAN strand, because it is the primary purpose of the study (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 2008). The point of interface or the mixing occurs primarily during data interpretation. Using an embedded design broadens existing understanding and perspectives about a phenomenon; however, there is a potential challenge that the quantitative and qualitative data may not integrate easily. When this is the case, each data strand will be reported separately.

Target Population and IRB Approval

The study focus on Sudanese and Vietnamese refugee youth and parents in Lincoln, Nebraska. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, Lincoln has a population of over 265,000 people (American Factfinder, 2014). The majority are White/ Caucasian Americans (86.8%), followed by Black/ African Americans (4.3%), Asians (4.3%), American Indians/ Alaska Natives (0.6%) and others (1.1%). Lincoln has been a resettlement site for many refugee groups. Currently, it is home to approximately 5,000 Vietnamese (American Factfinder, 2014) and over 3,000 Sudanese refugees (Cornwell, 2011).

Vietnamese refugees arrived in Lincoln in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Sudanese refugees were resettled in the latter part of the 1990s and early 2000s.

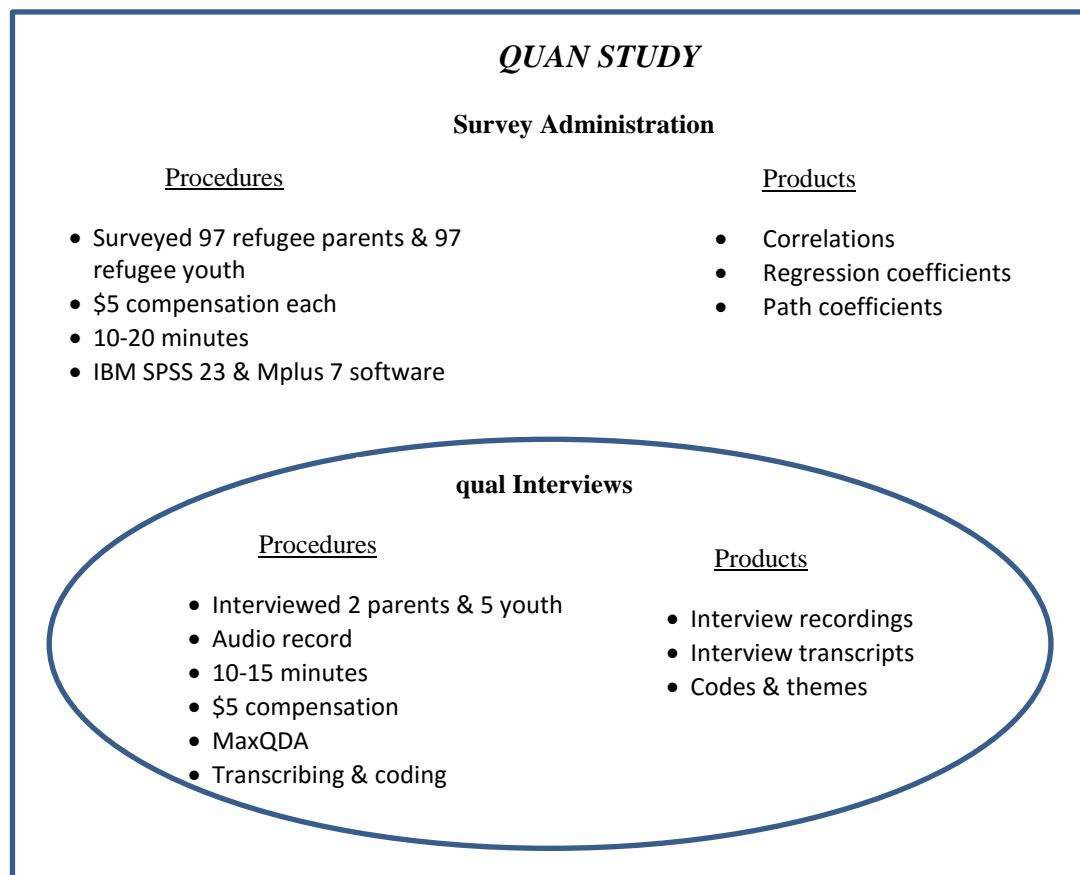


Figure 1. QUAN (qual) embedded study design

These varying decades of settlement make both populations ideal for examining potential differences in the acculturation process and stress levels between newly arrived and more settled communities.

In this study, refugee status is self-identified by the participants. A parent is defined as an individual who has biological children of his/her own. A child or youth is defined as an individual who is between the ages of 12 and 25, who was either born in their country of origin or in the U.S. to refugee or immigrant parents, and currently do not have biological children of their own.

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (Appendix A) approved all recruitment and data collection procedures. Recruitment methods include the use of flyers, contact with community centers and word-of-mouth or personal contacts. The researcher contacted the Sudanese Youth Club and the Asian Community and Cultural Center and posted flyers at various community venues, such as grocery stores, churches and temples. The researcher met with interested participants to explain the study and to provide them with the survey packet. Most of the participants took the packet home to their family and filled it out with their child or parent. They contacted the researcher when the survey packet was completed and ready to be picked up.

Quantitative Strand

Sample. Surveys were collected from 97 parent-child dyads. Data from six dyads were discarded, either due to significant amounts of missing data or because the survey was filled out only by the parent and not the child. Of the 91 remaining dyads, eight self-identify as Sudanese/Sudanese American, with eight mothers between the ages of 32 and 55 years ($M=45.7$ years, $SD=9.3$). Their children are 12 to 30 years of age ($M=20.4$ years, $SD=5.8$), with the majority being daughters ($n=5$). The Sudanese/Sudanese American families ranged in size from two to 10 people ($M=5.69$, $SD=1.69$), who have been in the U.S. for about 11 to 19 years ($M=15.6$ years, $SD=3.1$). The majority (72%) had annual household income between \$21,000 and \$40,000.

The 82 remaining Vietnamese dyads consist of 45 father-son pairs, 22 mother-daughter pairs and seven father-daughter pairs. These families range in size from three to

10 people ($M=5.5$, $SD=1.5$). The majority (70.9%) have annual household incomes between \$21,000 and \$40,000.

The Vietnamese parents range in age from 31 to 65 years ($M=47.12$ years, $SD=5.79$), with the majority being fathers ($n=52$, 63.4%). Most of the parents (50.6%) have some high school education or less. About one-third (32.1%) have completed high school, and few (17.2%) had some secondary higher education. The Vietnamese parents have been in the U.S. for 10 to 40 years ($M=22.70$ years, $SD=5.49$).

The children range in age from 13 to 28 years ($M = 20.44$ years, $SD=3.69$), with 29.5% age 18 years or younger and 70.5% age 19 years or older. The majority of the children are sons ($n=51$, 62.2%). Over a quarter (28%) has completed high school and approximately 40% have some or have completed higher education. The Vietnamese children have been in the U.S. for 10 to 26 years ($M=18.67$ years, $SD=3.34$).

The survey did not ask whether respondents were born in the U.S. or in their country of origin. However, an age-of-arrival variable was computed by subtracting the children's age and their reported length of residence. A score of zero indicates that they were either born in the U.S. or arrived when they were less than a year old. Over half of the children (56.8%) were in this category.

Recruitment for both samples was conducted through various community venues using snowball sampling, where existing participants suggest or refer potential participants for the study. However, the response rate for the Sudanese sample was much lower than the Vietnamese sample. Due to the small and uneven sample size of Sudanese/Sudanese Americans, the final analyses for this study used 82 dyads (Table 1)

who self-identified as Vietnamese/ Vietnamese American (this group label will be simplified and referred to as Vietnamese throughout the rest of this study).

Table 1
Vietnamese Sample Descriptive Statistics

	M	SD	%
<u>Parent (n=82)</u>			
Age (years)	47.12	5.79	
Gender: Male			63.4
Education			
Some high school or less			50.6
Completed high school			32.1
Some college			3.7
Associate/ Bachelor's degree			13.5
Length of residence	22.70	5.49	
<u>Children (n=82)</u>			
Age (years)	20.44	3.69	
Gender: Male			62.2
Education			
Some high school or less			32.9
Completed high school			28.0
Some college			12.2
Associate/ Bachelor's degree			26.9
Length of residence	18.67	3.34	
<u>Dyad</u>			
Household size	5.50	1.53	
Annual household income			
\$20,000 or less			13.9
\$21,000-\$40,000			70.9
\$41,000-\$60,000			10.1
\$61,000 or more			5.1

QUAN sampling procedure. Each participant received an envelope containing an informed consent form, explaining the purpose of the study and their rights, along with a copy of the questionnaire packet. Youth participants younger than 12 years of age received an envelope with a Child Assent form and those between the age of 13 and 18 years received a Youth Assent form. Both groups received a Parental Consent form which required their parents' signatures to allow for permission to participate. Finally,

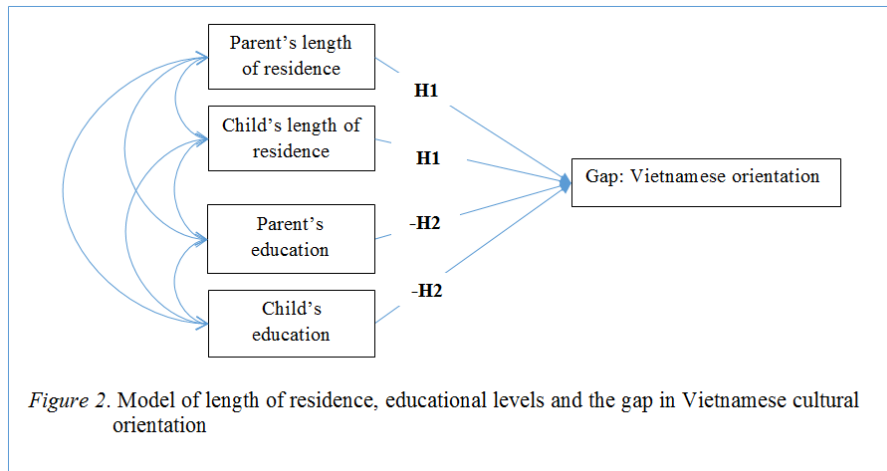
youth over the age of 19 received an Adult Informed Consent form and did not need parental consent. Many of the participants took the survey home with them to complete and later contacted the researcher when they were ready to be picked up. Surveys that occurred in the presence of the research generally took about 10 to 20 minute to complete. A \$5 compensation was given to each participant for their time.

QUAN hypotheses. The purpose of the quantitative phase is to address two research questions. The first examines how the length of residence and educational levels affect the acculturation gaps between parents and their children (Figure 2-5). The second research question investigates the effects of these acculturation gaps and perceived stress on family functioning (Figure 6-9). The aim of the second research question is to determine the actor- and partner-effects, as well as, direct and indirect effects of the acculturation gaps and perceived stress on family functioning of Vietnamese parent-child dyads.

Research Question 1: What are the effects of length of residence and educational levels on acculturation gaps? In this study, it is hypothesized that the length of residence has differential effects on different domains of acculturation. Children tend to lose their cultural heritage as they immerse themselves in the mainstream society. Therefore, longer length of residence is hypothesized to link to larger gaps in the heritage cultural orientation and language competency between Vietnamese parents and children. As for educational levels, it is hypothesized that the more education parents and children have, the smaller the gaps that exist in their Vietnamese cultural orientation and language competency.

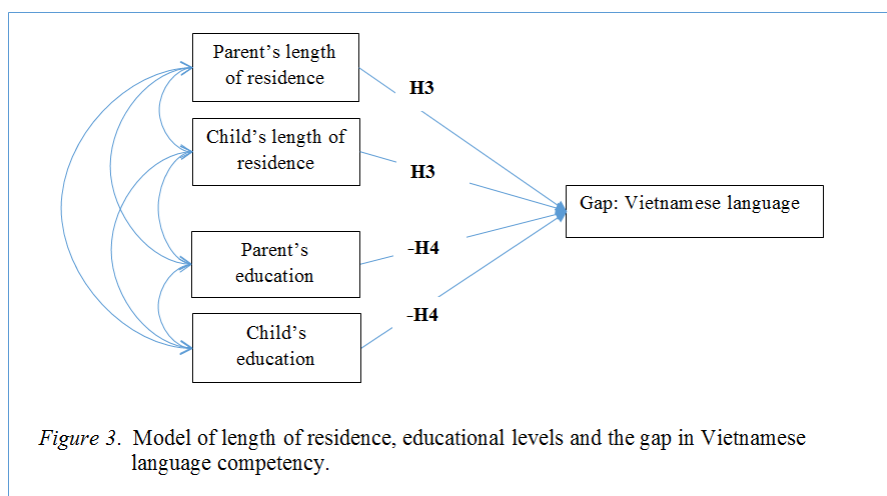
H1: Longer length of residence will be associated with larger gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation between parents and children.

H2: Higher parent and child educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation between the dyad.



H3: Longer length of residence will be associated with larger gaps in Vietnamese language competency between parents and children.

H4: Higher parent and child educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in Vietnamese language competency between the dyad.



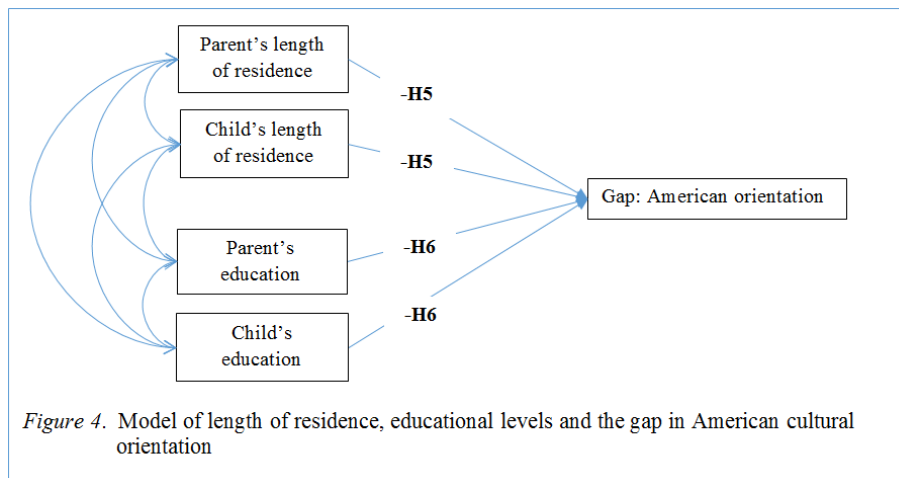
Longer length of residence is hypothesized to narrow the gap in American cultural orientation and language competency between Vietnamese parents and children.

Educational levels are also hypothesized to influence the gap in American acculturation.

Specifically, higher levels of education are expected to be associated with smaller gaps in American cultural orientation and language competency between parents and youth.

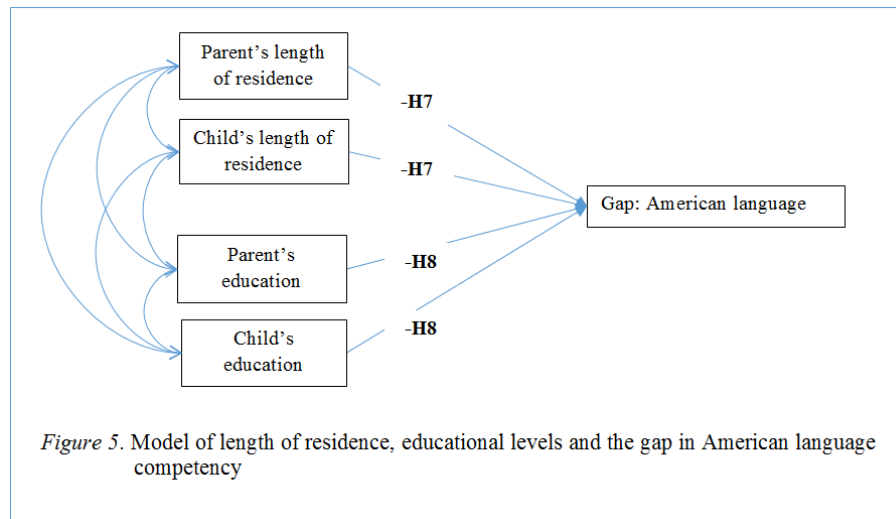
H5: Longer length of residence will be associated with smaller gaps in American cultural orientation between parents and children.

H6: Higher parent and child educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in American cultural orientation between the dyad.



H7: Longer length of residence will be associated with smaller gaps in American language competency between parents and children.

H8: Higher parent and child educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in American language competency between the dyad.

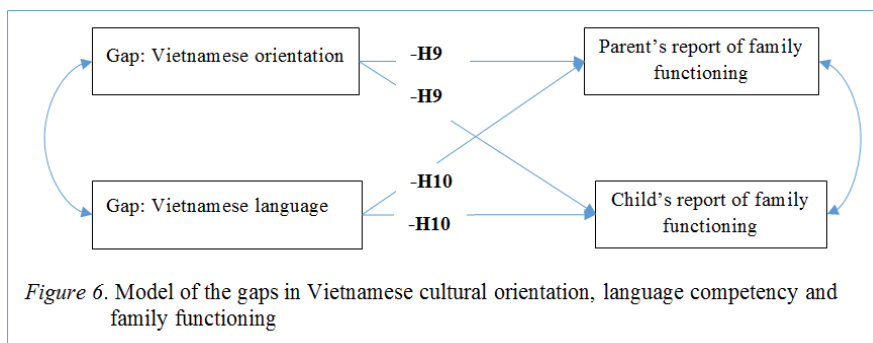


Research Question 2: What are the effects of the acculturation gaps and perceived stress on family functioning? Research Question 2 aim to test the acculturation-gap distress hypothesis. First, the individual relationships between acculturation gaps and family functioning is tested. Next, the specific relationship between perceived stress and family functioning is examined. Finally, all of these variables are combined into a comprehensive model to test whether acculturation influences family functioning through perceived stress.

In the first set of hypotheses, the gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation and language competency are proposed to have negative associations with family functioning. In other words, the larger the gap between parents and children in their Vietnamese orientation and their native language competency, the worse family functioning they would report.

H9: Larger gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.

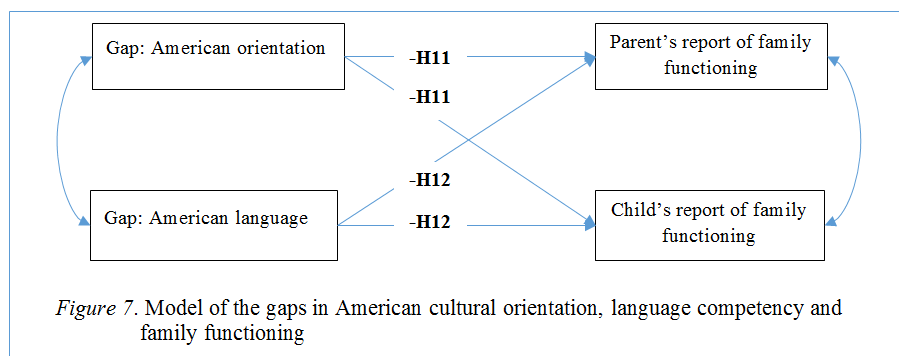
H10: Larger gaps in Vietnamese language competency will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.



Similarly, it is hypothesized that larger gaps in American cultural orientation and English language competency will be associated with lower family functioning as well.

H11: Larger gaps in American cultural orientation will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.

H12: Larger gaps in American language competency will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.

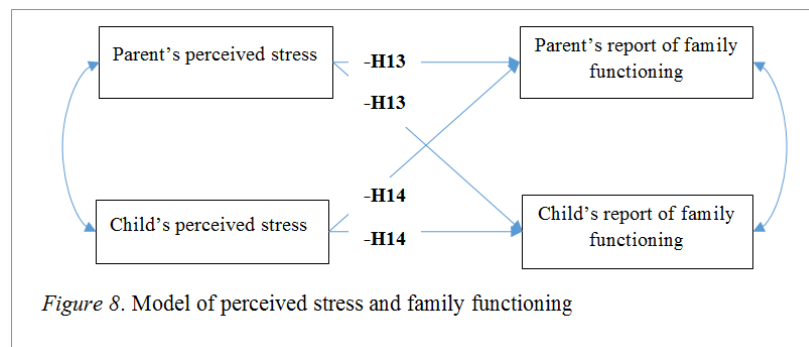


An Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was used to test the individual effects of perceived stress as reported by each member of the dyad on his/her own report of family functioning. It is hypothesized that perceived stress has an overall negative

effect on all reports of family functioning, where higher perceived stress is associated with lower family functioning, both for the child and his/her parent.

H13: Higher perceived parental stress will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.

H14: Higher perceived child stress will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.



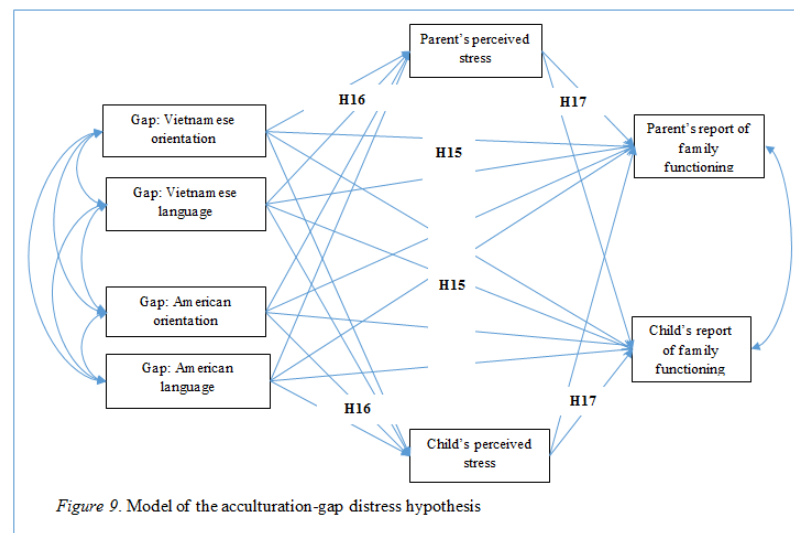
Finally, to test the acculturation-gap hypothesis, the following path model is proposed to examine both the relationships between acculturation gaps, perceived stress and family functioning. It is hypothesized that larger acculturation gaps are associated with poorer family functioning (H15). Secondly, larger acculturation gaps are also related to higher levels of reported perceived stress (H16). Third, it is hypothesized that parents and children who report experiencing more stress will also report poorer family functioning (H17). Finally, there will be significant indirect effects between acculturation gaps and family functioning, through perceived stress (H18).

H15: Larger acculturation gaps will predict poorer parents' and children's reports of family functioning.

H16: Larger acculturation gaps will predict higher parents' and children's reports of perceived stress.

H17: Higher parents' and children's perceived stress will negatively predict parents' and children's reports of family functioning.

H18: There are significant negative indirect effects of parents' and children's perceived stress on the relationship between acculturation gaps and parent's and children's reports of family functioning.



QUAN Measures.

Outcome Variable: Family Functioning Style Scale (FFSS). The outcome variable of *family functioning* is measured by the Family Functioning Style Scale (FFSS) consisting of 26 items assessing the capabilities and competencies of each family from the perspective of its members (Trivette, Dunst, Deal, Hamby, & Saxton, 1994). Participants are asked to rate how similar each item is to their family on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with one being '*Not at all like my family*' and five being '*Almost always like my family*' (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1994). Sample items include, '*We make personal*

sacrifices if they help our family, or *'We find time to be together even with our busy schedule'*. There are many family measures; however, the FFSS is the most comprehensive and assesses multiple areas of family functioning, such as interactional patterns, family values, coping strategies, family commitment and resource mobilization. Total scores are calculated by adding all 26 items together (range 26-130), with higher scores indicating higher family functioning (Trivette et al., 1994). Various studies have validated this measure, and it has a high correlation with similar measures, such as the Family Hardiness Index (Early, 2001). Analysis from this study show that the FFSS has high levels of reliability ($\alpha = 0.93$ for parents, and $\alpha = 0.95$ for children).

Predictor Variable 1: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The first criterion variable is *perceived stress*, measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS: Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelsein, 1983). The revised PSS consist of 10 items, such as *'In the past month, how often have you felt unable to control the important things in your life?'* The instrument is designed to be used with a community sample. Participants are asked to rate their responses on a Likert-type scale from 0= *Never* to 4= *Very often*. Some PSS items are reversed coded due to negative wording. These include items 4, 5, 7 and 8. Adding the ratings for all 10 items together results in a total score, with higher sum scores indicating higher levels of perceived stress. High internal reliabilities for this measure are reported. Analysis from this study show slightly lower estimates ($\alpha = 0.76$ for parents, and $\alpha = 0.69$ for children), but the values still indicate adequate reliability.

Predictor Variable 2: General Ethnicity Questionnaire (GEQ)

The second criterion variable is *acculturation*, and is measured by the abridged version of the General Ethnicity Questionnaire (GEQ), which consists of 76 items (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). One of the strengths of the GEQ is the multidimensionality of the inventory, which contains two parts or dimensions. The first part (GEQ-Heritage: 38 items) ask participants to reflect on items relating to their native culture, such as, *I am proud of my heritage culture*. The second part (GEQ-American: 38 items) ask participants to reflect on the same items but focuses on the mainstream culture instead, for example, *I am proud of American culture*. This structure allows participants to express a more fluid sense of their cultural identity, rather than choosing one over the other.

Both the GEQ-Heritage version and the GEQ-American version report high internal reliability (Kang, 2006; Tsai et al., 2001). In this study, internal reliability of the GEQ-Heritage version is also high ($\alpha = 0.94$ for parents, and $\alpha = 0.89$ for children). The GEQ-American version has high reliability as well ($\alpha = 0.94$ for parents, $\alpha = 0.95$ for children). The measure has also been validated (Tsai et al., 2000).

Another strength of the GEQ is the variety of question formats, including the *endorsement questions*, *frequency questions*, and *proficiency questions* (Kang, 2006). For example, Items 1 to 25 on both the GEQ-Heritage and GEQ-American version ask participants to endorse each item by rating the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement about various life domains, such as cultural activities, affiliation, and pride. Items 26 to 34 of both versions ask participants to rate the *frequency* in which they speak their native language and English. Finally, Item 35 to 38 ask about the

proficiency/competency in which participants can speak each language. As suggested by the developer, Item 5 on both versions is reverse coded due to the negative wording (Tsai, 2016). In this study, four summary scores and their reliabilities are calculated following the procedures offered by Kang (2006), including:

- 1) an average of the first 25 general acculturation items from the GEQ-Heritage version ($\alpha = .91$ for parent, $\alpha = .84$ for children)
- 2) an average of the 13 language competency items from the GEQ-Heritage version ($\alpha = .91$ for parent, $\alpha = .84$ for children)
- 3) an average of the first 25 general acculturation items from the GEQ-American version ($\alpha = .86$ for parent, $\alpha = .94$ for children), and
- 4) an average of the 13 language competency items from the GEQ-American version ($\alpha = .94$ for parent, $\alpha = .85$ for children).

QUAN data collection and analyses. Parents and youth receive similar survey packets from the three measures described above and eight additional demographic questions relating to their length of residence and racial/ethnic background (Refer to Appendix B). The PI utilizes SPSS 23 (IBM Corp, 2014) for data entry and data cleaning. Data are entered using the double entry method (Kenny et al., 2006), where a dyad variable is created and the data from each parent and their child are entered across in the same row (e.g. *Age.1* signifies the parent variable and *Age.2* signifies the child variable). Most of the measures have less than 5% missing data (range 1.2% to 4.8%), with the exception of the Child's GEQ-American version, which has 7.3% missing data. Missing data are handled using multiple imputations on Mplus 7. Additional analyses are conducted with the five imputed datasets, producing results that vary within one or two

decimal values (e.g. .15 vs. .14 or .21 vs. .19) without changes in the significance levels; therefore, the results reported here are from the original dataset to maintain authenticity. When relevant, imputed results are reported to serve as a comparison.

Non-independence and power analysis in dyadic data. Prior to conducting dyadic data analyses, researchers must determine two important characteristics relating to their data: *distinguishability* and *non-independence* (Kenny et al., 2006).

Distinguishability deals with whether members within each dyad can be identified in some theoretically or empirically meaningful way (Kenny et al., 2006). Dyads within this study are distinguishable based on their role as either parent or child.

As for non-independence, ‘If the two scores from the two members of the dyad are non-independent, then those two scores are more similar to (or different from) one another than two scores from two people who are not members of the same dyad’ (Kenny et al., 2006, p. 25). In traditional research, independence is emphasized, and it is assumed that each case or participant’s score is unique and independent of other cases or scores in the dataset. Scores are assumed to be linked in dyadic design, as members are often paired in a nonrandom way and experience a shared context. Based on the five types of linkages described by Kenny et al. (2006), participants in this study are associated by the *kinship linkage*, because these distinguishable parent-child dyads are within the same family.

If preliminary analyses confirm that members’ scores are indeed linked by their kinship association, then dyadic analyses can be conducted. If non-independence does not exist, then members’ scores must be treated as separate cases and traditional modes of analyses will be employed. There are several bivariate and multivariate statistical tests

that can be used to measure the degree of non-independence, such as Pearson product-moment correlation, partial correlation and canonical correlation (Kenny et al., 2006). In this study, non-independence was assessed using Pearson product-moment correlation, because the dyads are distinguishable based on their role (e.g. parent vs. child). Kenny et al. (2006) recommend having a minimum of 25 dyads in order to have sufficient power when conducting the test of non-independence. More specifically, 80 or more dyads are needed in order to detect a medium effect size (0.3) with 78% power. The analysis was conducted with 82 dyads and with the outcome variable (e.g. Family Functioning). This variable should theoretically be similar for parents and children, due to their shared context. Results of the original data show a significant and moderate correlation between parents' and children's report of Family Functioning ($r=.48, p<.001$). Similar results are obtained from the five imputed data sets, with significant correlations ranging from $r=.48$ to $r=.49, p<.001$. This supports the continuation of dyadic data analyses. To test the hypotheses, multiple regressions and path analyses are conducted using a structural equation modeling framework within Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015).

Qualitative Strand

Qual sampling and data collection. Additional qualitative data are collected in this embedded study design. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is beneficial when researchers need to explore a phenomenon that cannot be measured easily by traditional instruments. Corbin and Strauss (2008) add that “qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables” (p. 12). The purpose of this embedded *qual* strand is to gather supplemental data to enhance

interpretation of the survey results. In-depth face-to-face interviews are conducted with a subgroup of Vietnamese participants (n=7) who agreed to be interviewed. This helps to generate a deeper understanding of acculturation, stress and family functioning. The interview protocol consists of 5 open-ended questions to gather participants' experiences in taking the survey and their thoughts about the survey topics (Appendix C). For example, participants are asked: *Did the survey questions reflect your experience as a refugee?* Additional probing questions are asked during the interviews. Interviews last about 10 to 15 minutes and are audio-recorded and transcribed by the PI. The audio files and the transcripts are kept in a locked cabinet. Each participant is compensated with an additional \$5 for his or her time.

Qual data analysis. The transcribed data is entered into MAXqda (VERBI Software, 2015) to analyze and are coded for themes. The overall purpose is to make sense of the text data and understand the participants' experiences. The data analysis process follows specific systematic steps using a grounded theory framework as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008). A sample of the coding process is included in Appendix D.

First, the PI reads all of the transcripts to get a sense of the qualitative data, and to make sure that there are no obvious errors made during the transcription process. The PI notes ideas that arise from this initial reading. Next, microanalysis or *open coding* is performed, where the researcher reads each transcript and “[breaks] open the data to consider all possible meanings” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 59). Broad categories or initial themes are generated based on participants' responses to the five central questions, such as *stress*, *acculturation* and *family functioning* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The third

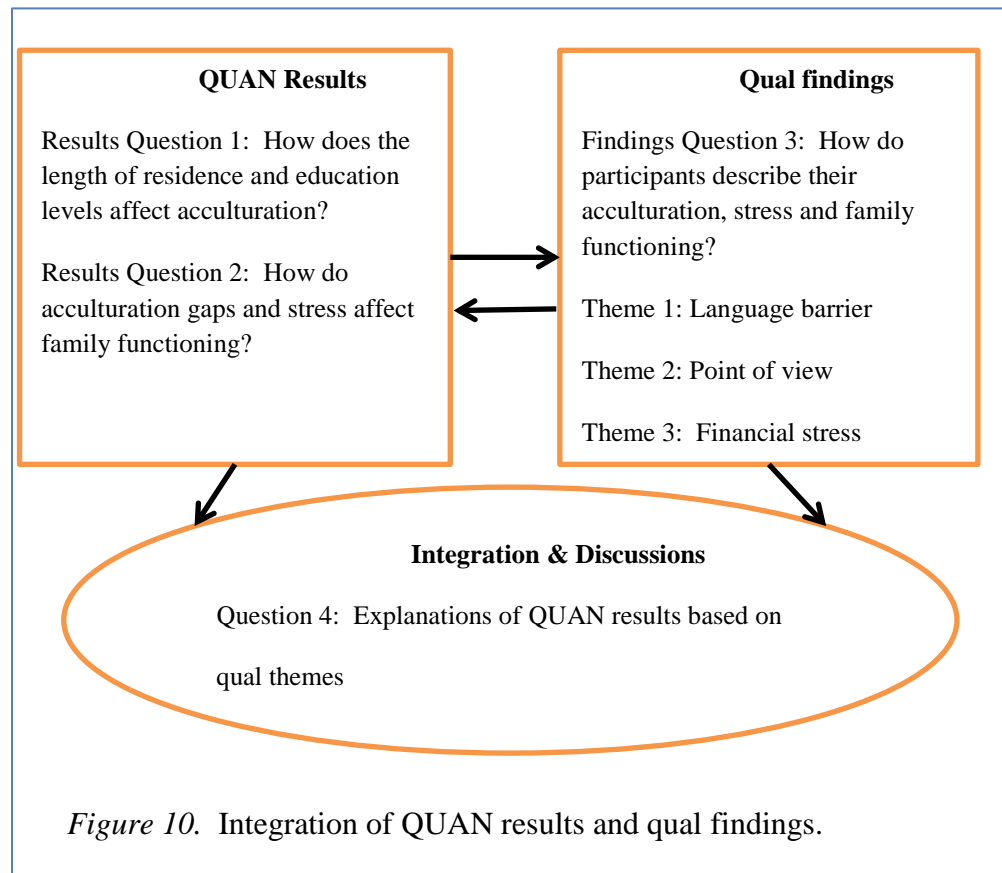
step is *axial coding*, where the initial themes are explored to identify the relationships that exist among them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, the PI looks through the initial themes to see how acculturation influences family functioning. Finally, *selective coding* is conducted by reading over each transcript to highlight codes that fit under the final themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Illustrative quotes or in vivo codes from the participants are used as headings or labels for the themes.

Validity, rigor and trustworthiness. Triangulation method and member checking is utilized to confirm and increase the trustworthiness of the findings. According to Creswell (2013), *triangulation* is a strategy of comparing “multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (p. 251). In this study, different sources of data are collected by interviewing both parents and youth to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The themes emerge by comparing their responses. *Member checking* technique is also applied by asking the participants to review the central themes (Creswell, 2013). Two of the interviewees agreed to look at the themes and to offer their input as to how closely it represents their experiences. They comment that the themes are clear and easy to understand. One interviewee thought the themes are too broad, but the codes help give more specific details and relevance to her experience as a refugee. Therefore, the original themes are maintained without significant changes.

Mixed Methods Integration

The findings of the qualitative interviews and the results of the quantitative survey strand are integrated to provide a more complete picture of individual and refugee family

functioning (Figure 10). Finally, the ways in which the qualitative findings explain and supplement the quantitative results are discussed.



CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Quantitative Results

Parents' total scores on the Family Functioning Style Scale (FFSS) range from 85 to 130, with a mean of 117.67 (SD=10.85). The parents' FFSS do not have missing data. Children's FFSS sum scores range from 55 to 130, with the mean of 112.10 (SD=15.57). The means and standard deviations of the children's FFSS imputed sum scores vary only within a few decimal places, ranging from M=112.18 (SD=15.57) to M=112.22 (SD=15.54). Paired samples *t*-test show that parents' FFSS scores are significantly different from children's FFSS scores ($t=3.60, p<.01$). In general, parents are more likely to report better family functioning than children. Furthermore, parents (M=15.89, SD=3.35) report significantly lower perceived stress than children (M=17.04, SD=4.17) ($t=-2.14, p<.05$).

As for acculturation levels, parents (M=4.38, SD=.37) report stronger orientation towards their Vietnamese culture than children (M=3.92, SD=.38) ($t=8.47, p<.001$). Likewise, they also have higher Vietnamese language competency (M=4.29, SD=.62) than children (M=2.80, SD=.60) ($t=15.83, p<.001$). On the other hand, parents (M=3.51, SD=.36) report weaker orientation towards American culture than children (M=4.27, SD=.54) ($t= -10.26, p<.001$), and lower English language competency as well (M=3.10, SD=.72, M=4.68, SD=.38, $t= -16.12, p<.001$, respectively).

Table 2
Comparisons between Parents and Children on Demographic and Study Variables

Variables	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Dyad</u>	Paired <i>t</i> -test	<i>p</i> -value
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Family functioning	117.67 (10.85)	112.10 (15.57)		3.60	.001
Perceived stress	15.89 (3.35)	17.04 (4.17)		-2.14	.035
Vietnamese orientation	4.38 (.37)	3.92 (.38)		8.47	.000
Vietnamese language	4.29 (.62)	2.80 (.60)		15.83	.000
American orientation	3.51 (.36)	4.27 (.54)		-10.26	.000
American language	3.10 (.72)	4.68 (.38)		-16.12	.000
Gap: Vietnamese Orientation			.57 (.36)		
Gap: Vietnamese Language			1.56 (.71)		
Gap: American Orientation			.92 (.41)		
Gap: American Language			1.67 (.73)		

Note: SD = standard deviation

Table 3 shows the correlations between the variables. The highest significant correlations are between the acculturative gaps. Specifically, the gap in American orientation and American language competency are strongly correlated ($r = .59, p < .001$); as well as, the gap in Vietnamese cultural orientation and Vietnamese language competency ($r = .49, p < .001$).

Table 3
Correlations among Predictors and Outcomes in Parent-Child Dyads

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Parent stress							
2. Child stress	.18						
3. Gap: Vietnamese orientation	-.04	.12					
4. Gap: Vietnamese language	.04	.27*	.49***				
5. Gap: American orientation	-.07	-.12	.37***	.32**			
6. Gap: American language	-.04	.14	.26*	.41***	.59***		
7. Parent family functioning	.05	-.19	.30**	.35***	.46***	.38***	
8. Child family functioning	-.22*	-.28**	-.08	.02	.45***	.39***	.48***

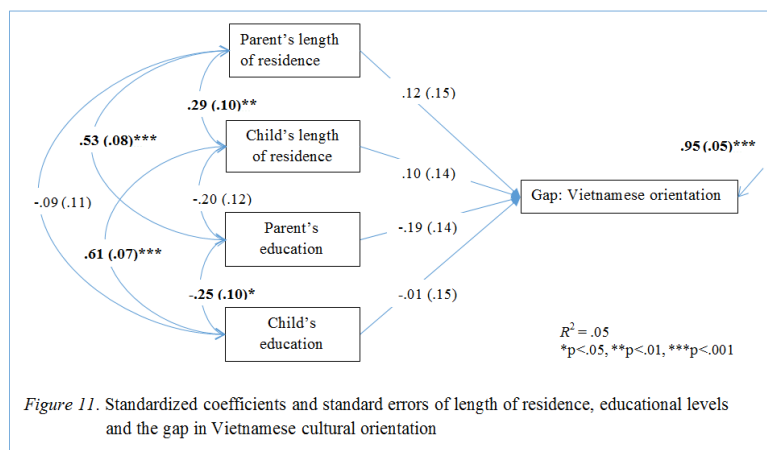
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Research question 1: Length of residence, educational levels, age and acculturation gaps. Table 4 presents all of the hypotheses and the levels of support derived from the data. Results do not provide support for H1 or H2 (Figure 11). These four predictors account for 5% of the variance in the gap in Vietnamese cultural orientation ($R^2=.05$), which is not significant, $F(4, 75) = .97, p>.10$. Parents' length of residence ($\beta=.12, p>.10$) and children's length of residence ($\beta=.10, p>.10$), as well as, parents' education ($\beta= -.19, p>.10$) and children's education ($\beta= -.01, p>.10$) are not significant predictors of the gap in Vietnamese cultural orientation, although they are in the predicted directions.

Table 4
Research Hypotheses and Level of Support

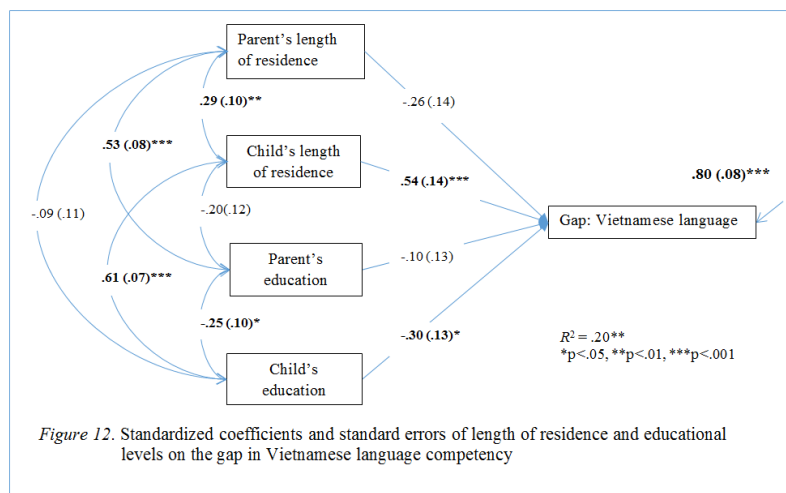
Hypotheses	Support
<u>Research Question 1</u>	
H1: Longer length of residence will be associated with larger gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation between parents and children.	No
H2: Higher parent and child educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation between the dyad.	No
H3: Longer length of residence will be associated with larger gaps in Vietnamese language competency between parents and children.	Partial
H4: Higher parents and children educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in Vietnamese language competency between the dyad.	Partial
H5: Longer length of residence will be associated with smaller gaps in American cultural orientation between parents and children.	No
H6: Higher parents and children educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in American cultural orientation between the dyad.	Partial
H7: Longer length of residence will be associated with smaller gaps in American language competency between parents and children.	Partial
H8: Higher parents and children educational levels will be associated with smaller gaps in American language competency between the dyad.	Partial
<u>Research Question 2</u>	
H9: Larger gaps in Vietnamese cultural orientation will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.	No
H10: Larger gaps in Vietnamese language competency will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.	Partial

H11: Larger gaps in American cultural orientation will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.	Yes
H12: Larger gaps in American language competency will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.	No
H13: Higher perceived parental stress will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.	No
H14: Higher perceived child stress will be associated with lower family functioning as reported by parents and children.	Partial
H15: Larger acculturation gaps will predict poorer parents' and children's reports of family functioning.	Partial
H16: Larger acculturation gaps will predict higher parents' and children's reports of perceived stress.	Partial
H17: Higher parents' and children's perceived stress will negatively predict parents' and children's reports of family functioning.	No
H18: There will be significant negative <u>indirect effects</u> of parents' and children's perceived stress on the relationship between acculturation gaps and parent's and children's reports of family functioning.	No

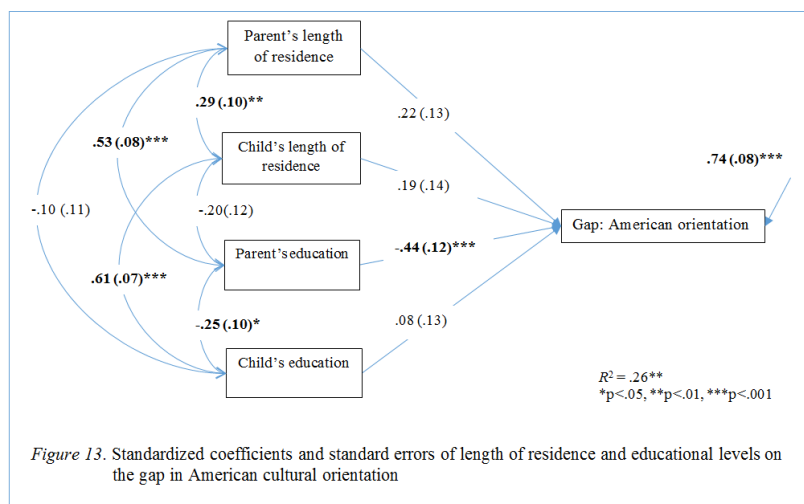


Results provide partial support for H3 and H4 (Figure 12). These four predictors account for about 20% of the variance in the gap in Vietnamese language competency ($R^2=.20$), which is highly significant, $F(4,75) = 4.67, p<.001$. Although parents' length of residence ($\beta=-.26, p>.05$) and education ($\beta=-.10, p>.10$) are not significant predictors, children's length of residence ($\beta=.54, p<.001$) and education ($\beta=-.30, p<.05$) are significant predictors of the gap in Vietnamese language competency. The longer children live in the U.S., the greater the gap in Vietnamese language competency between

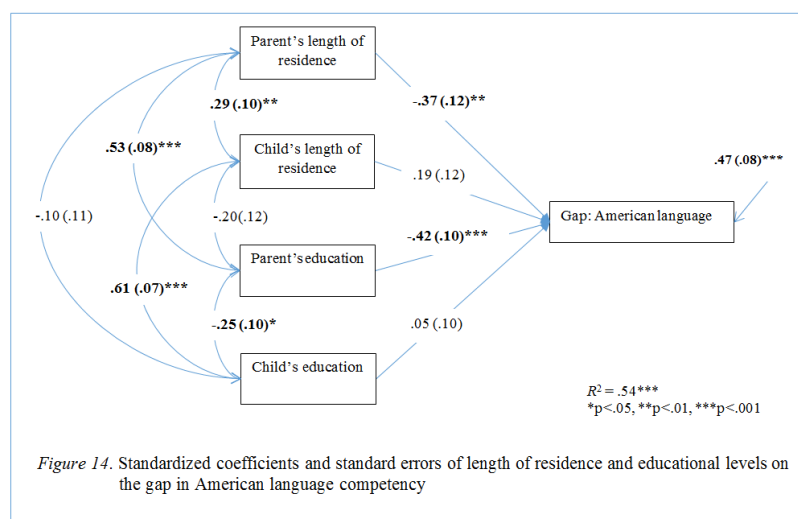
children and parents. However, the more education children have, the smaller this gap become.



Results provide partial support for H5 and H6 (Figure 13). These four predictors account for about 26% of the variance in the gap in American cultural orientation ($R^2 = .26$), which is highly significant, $F(4, 75) = 6.64$, $p < .001$. Of the four predictors, only parents' education ($\beta = -.44$, $p < .001$) predict the gap in American cultural orientation. The more educated the parents are, the smaller the gap between their own American cultural orientation and their children's.



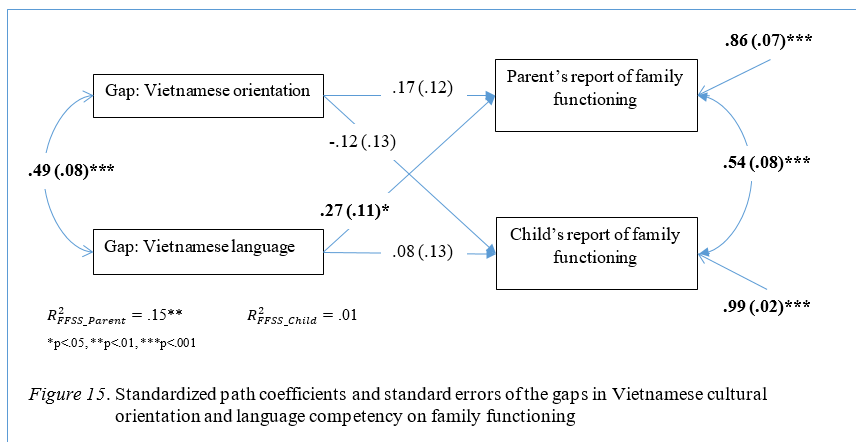
Results provide partial support for H7 and H8 (Figure 14). These four predictors account for about 54% of the variance in the gap in American cultural orientation ($R^2=.54$), which is highly significant, $F(4, 75) = 21.64, p<.001$. Of the four predictors, parent's length of residence ($\beta= -.37, p<.001$) and their levels of education ($\beta= -.42, p<.001$) negatively predict the gap in American language competency. The longer parents live in the U.S. and the more educated they are, the smaller the gap in their familial American language competency.



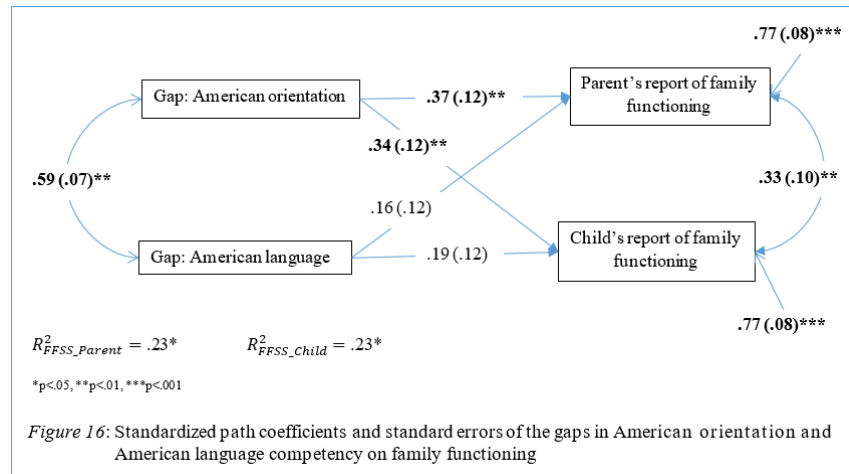
Research question 2: Acculturation gaps, perceived stress and family

functioning. The second research question examines the relationships between the different acculturation gaps and perceived stress on family functioning. H9 and H10 test the effect of Vietnamese cultural orientation and language competency on dyadic report of family functioning. H9 is not supported, but H10 is partially supported (Figure 15). The gap in Vietnamese cultural and language competency accounts for about 15% of the variance in parents' reports of family functioning ($R^2=.15$), which is highly significant, $F(2,79) = 6.71, p<.01$. Of the two predictors, only the gap in Vietnamese language

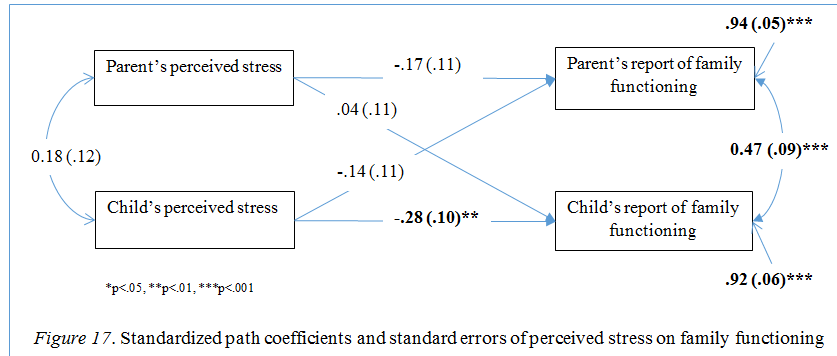
competency significantly predict parents' reports of family functioning ($\beta = .27, p < .05$), but it is not in the direction hypothesized. Larger gaps in Vietnamese language competency are associated with better family functioning, as reported by parents. None of the other relationships is significant.



Secondly, there is support for H11 but not H12 (Figure 16). The gap in American cultural orientation and language competency accounts for about 23% of the variance in parents' report of family functioning ($R^2 = .23$) and child's report of family functioning ($R^2 = .23$), which are highly significant, $F(2, 79) = 11.90, p < .001$ and $F(2, 79) = 11.56, p < .001$ respectively. The gap in American cultural orientation significantly predicts both parents' ($\beta = .37, p < .001$) and children's ($\beta = .34, p < .01$) reports of family functioning. Once again, the relationships are in the opposite direction. Larger familial gaps in American cultural orientation are associated with better family functioning for both parents and children.



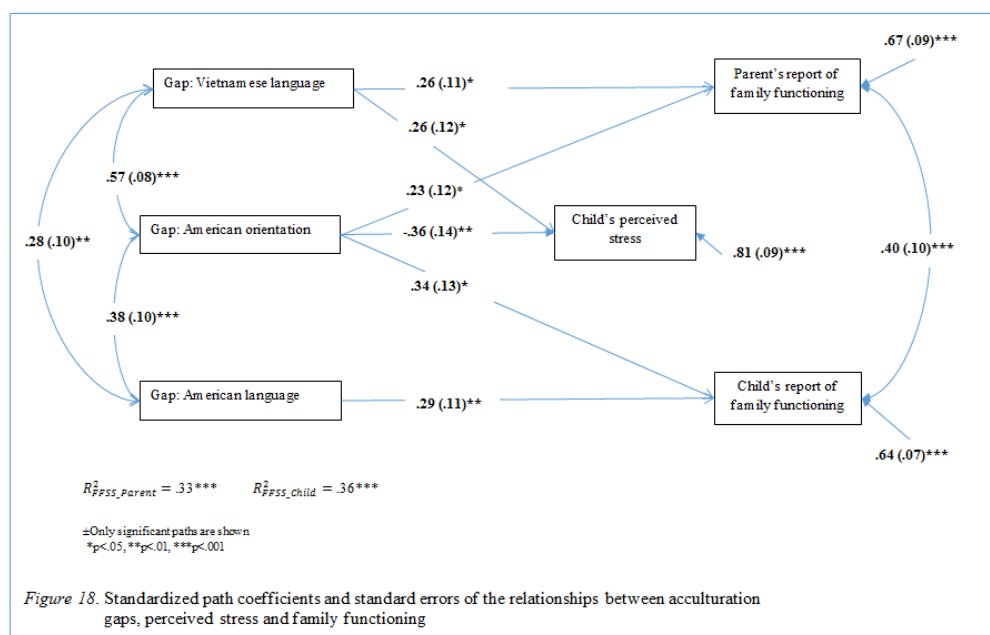
An APIM model is tested with H13 and H14, looking at the actor- and partner-effects of parents' and children's perceived stress on their respective report of family functioning (Figure 17). H13 is not supported. There is no actor- ($\beta = -.17, p > .10$) or partner-effect ($\beta = .04, p > .10$) for parents' perceived stress on family functioning. H14 is partially supported. There is only an actor-effect of the child's perceived stress on the child's report of family functioning ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$). In this first model, the parent's perceived stress and child's perceived stress are allowed to correlate; however, the correlation is not significant ($r = .17, p > .10$). Therefore, a second model is tested with this correlation constrained at zero, to free up one degree of freedom. This allows for a test of model fit to be conducted. Chi-square statistics is non-significant, $\chi^2(1) = 2.25, p > .10$; therefore, the null hypothesis that the model fits the covariance well is retained. RMSEA fit indices do not exceed the recommendations for model fit, but CFI and SRMR do (Hu & Bentler, 1999). RMSEA is .12, which do not meet the recommended value of $\leq .05$ for good model fit. However, CFI was .95, which meets the cut-off value of $\geq .95$. SRMR is .06, which is lower than the cut-off-value of $\leq .08$, showing acceptable fit.



All variables are combined together in one model to test the overall influence of the acculturation gaps on family functioning through perceived stress (Figure 18). The test for model fit is not significant, $\chi^2(1) = 1.92, p > .05$; therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. Although the RMSEA of 0.11 does not meet the recommended cut-off criteria of ≤ 0.05 for good fit, other fit indices show acceptable fit of the model to the data. Specifically, CFI is 0.99, exceeding the cut-off value of ≥ 0.95 , and SRMR is 0.02, which also meet the cut-off-value of ≤ 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Model results partially support H15 and H16, showing that the gap in Vietnamese language competency positively predict parents' reports of family functioning ($\beta = .26, p < .05$) and children's report of perceived stress ($\beta = .26, p < .05$). Therefore, as parents and children differ in their heritage language competency, parents reported better family functioning, but children reported experiencing more stress. Secondly, the gap in American cultural orientation positively predicted parents' reports of family functioning ($\beta = .23, p < .05$), and children's reports of family functioning ($\beta = .34, p < .01$), but negatively predicted children's reports of perceived stress ($\beta = -.36, p < .01$). In other words, as parents and children differ in their American cultural orientation, both children and parents reported better family functioning, and children reported lower stress.

Finally the gap in American language competency positively predicted children's reports of family functioning ($\beta=.29, p<.05$). As parents and children differ in their American language competency, children reported better family functioning.



To examine the specific indirect effects of perceived stress on the relationship between acculturation gaps and family functioning, a mediation model is tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 1,000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Results do not provide support for the *acculturation gap-distress hypothesis*. As shown in Table 5, the 95% confidence interval for all of the indirect estimates does contain zero, indicating that the mediation effects are not significantly different from zero (Lau & Cheung, 2012; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Therefore, neither parents' nor children's perceived stress mediate the relationship between acculturation gaps and family functioning.

Table 5
Unstandardized Estimates and Standard Errors of Direct and Indirect Effects

<u>Paths</u>	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Indirect</u>		<u>Indirect</u>		<u>Total</u>
		(via Parent's Stress)		(via Child's Stress)		
	b(SE)	b(SE)	95% CI	b(SE)	95% CI	b(SE)
Gap: VO → Parent's FFSS	2.80 (3.68)	.31 (.80)	-.79, 2.83	-1.13 (.93)	-3.69, .12	1.98(3.49)
Gap: VL → Parent's FFSS	3.91 (1.73)*	-.35 (.49)	-1.74, .34	-.96 (.75)	-3.08, .08	2.61 (1.78)
Gap: AO → Parent's FFSS	6.04 (3.01)*	.14 (.67)	-.78, 2.10	2.31 (1.71)	-.10, 6.76	8.50 (3.34)*
Gap: AL → Parent's FFSS	2.19 (2.00)	.06 (.38)	-.57, .99	-.89 (.80)	-3.30, .09	1.36 (2.27)
Gap: VO → Child's FFSS	-9.57 (7.39)	-.11(.65)	-2.53, .66	-1.70 (1.60)	-6.22, .16	-11.38 (7.14)
Gap: VL → Child's FFSS	-.42 (2.28)	.12 (.56)	-.44, 2.31	-1.44 (1.39)	-5.80, .16	-1.74 (1.83)
Gap: AO → Child's FFSS	13.12 (5.18)**	-.05 (.55)	-2.09, .69	3.50 (2.92)	-.32, 11.42	16.55 (4.50)***
Gap: AL → Child's FFSS	6.41 (2.44)**	-.02 (.32)	-1.03, .45	-1.34 (1.34)	-6.15, .12	5.04 (.03)*
χ^2 (df)						1.92 (1)
RMSEA (<.05)						.11
CFI (>.95)						.99
SRMR (<.08)						.02

VO: Vietnamese Orientation VL: Vietnamese Language AO: American Orientation AL: American Language

FFSS: Family Functioning Styles Scale

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Qualitative Findings

Survey reflections and experiences. The purpose of the qualitative strand is to gather additional information that may help to explain or supplement the quantitative survey data. In-depth interviews are conducted with a smaller subsample of Vietnamese parents (n=1 father, n=1 mother) and children (n=2 sons, n=3 daughters) from different dyads. Both of the parents were born in Vietnam. The two sons and one of the daughters were born in the U.S. *Table 6* lists some of the pseudonyms and some of their demographic characteristic. Pseudonyms are selected to reflect the orientation of the participant's name. All sons are given names beginning with S and all daughters are given names beginning with D.

Table 6
Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Pseudonym	Role	Age	Born in the U.S.	Length of residence
Phu	Father	50 years	No	33 years
My	Mother	32 years	No	28 years
Daisy	Daughter	15 years	Yes	15 years
Danh	Daughter	24 years	No	15 years
Diem	Daughter	25 years	No	20 years
Scott	Son	17 years	Yes	17 years
Sinh	Son	25 years	Yes	25 years

Note: Vietnamese and American names are included to reflect the orientation of the participants real name

First, participants are asked to provide feedback on the length and content of the survey. In general, many of the participants thought that the survey had a *good length* (n=4). Three of the youth thought that it was somewhat long. For example, Scott comments, “it wasn’t very long, but at the same time, it wasn’t very short. It took a decent amount of time” (Male youth, age 17). All participants thought that the survey questions are *all pretty easy* to understand and are mostly relevant to the refugee experience. One of the parents felt that the survey questions are more relevant at the beginning when he was a new refugee. He states that, “since I’ve been here so long, now I almost fitting in as a regular folk here, so it doesn’t apply to me too much now, but I assume it would be a long time ago” (Phu, age 50).

In terms of the specific scales, Sinh thought that it was interesting how the scale *broke apart the heritage and the American* questions (Male youth, age 25). He explained, *growing up I have always considered myself Vietnamese American, so to me, it was never two separate parts, but to read the survey as two separate parts was*

intriguing. For another youth, the questions made her think about various aspects of acculturation that she never thought of before. She commented:

“I think there were some things that I had never thought about that was really relevant to my refugee experience. Well, especially the sections on language and worshipping, and you know, what language I speak at work. I never thought about how much English I speak outside of my family” - (Danh, age 24).

Acculturation, stress and family functioning. Participants are asked to expand on each of the topics in the survey, relating to *acculturation*, *stress* and *family functioning*. They are asked about each topic separately, however, their comments are often intertwined. For instance, when talking about their family functioning, participants often describe differences in the acculturation of parents and children, and when asked about stress, participants discuss the cultural changes and expectations they experience. Therefore, all three topics are integrated and the themes are arranged to provide an exploratory understanding of how acculturation influence Vietnamese family function. Participants’ responses reveal three domains or issues relating to living in the U.S. *Figure 19* summarizes the emerging themes. It also includes the number of participants that discussed each theme and some examples of codes that made up the theme. In-vivo codes are used to label the final themes, which include: 1) *language barrier*, 2) *point of view*, and 3) *financial stress*. These three acculturation challenges affect family functioning in several ways. First, language barrier influences a) *family daily living* and b) *family communication*. Second, cultural differences in the point of view affect *parenting styles and expectations*, these expectations include: a) *education*, b) *career path*, and c) *retaining the culture*. The third theme is *financial stress*, affecting how

family spend time together. Moreover, *social support* emerges as a theme relating to how acculturation challenges can be overcome. Social support includes both *family support* and *community connections*. Each of the domains and its influences will be discussed in more detail below.

Language barrier. First, all seven participants mention *language barrier* as a major source of change and challenge. According to one father, *language barrier is number one*, affecting many aspects of Vietnamese family life (Phu, age 50). It influences both the *family daily living* (n=4) and *family communication* (n=3). Vietnamese refugees, like many other refugee groups, had a difficult time during the early phase of their arrival, performing daily living tasks, such as *learning how to drive, going to the doctor, going to the bank, and using services that are generally English-speaking* (My, age 32, Phu, age 50 and Danh, age 24). The language barrier also affects the *communication* of family members. One mother reflects, “in my family, we mostly speak English, but once we try to speak Vietnamese with the kids, then yeah. They don’t understand it or they don’t wanna use our language” (My, age 32). Lacking the language competency affects family members’ ability to share in a *deeply personal* way. Diem points out, “communication was very limited, in terms of sharing what your fears were...when you were unhappy...not really opening up as much as I should have or wanted to my family just because I didn’t know how...I guess it goes back to the language” (Female youth, age 25).

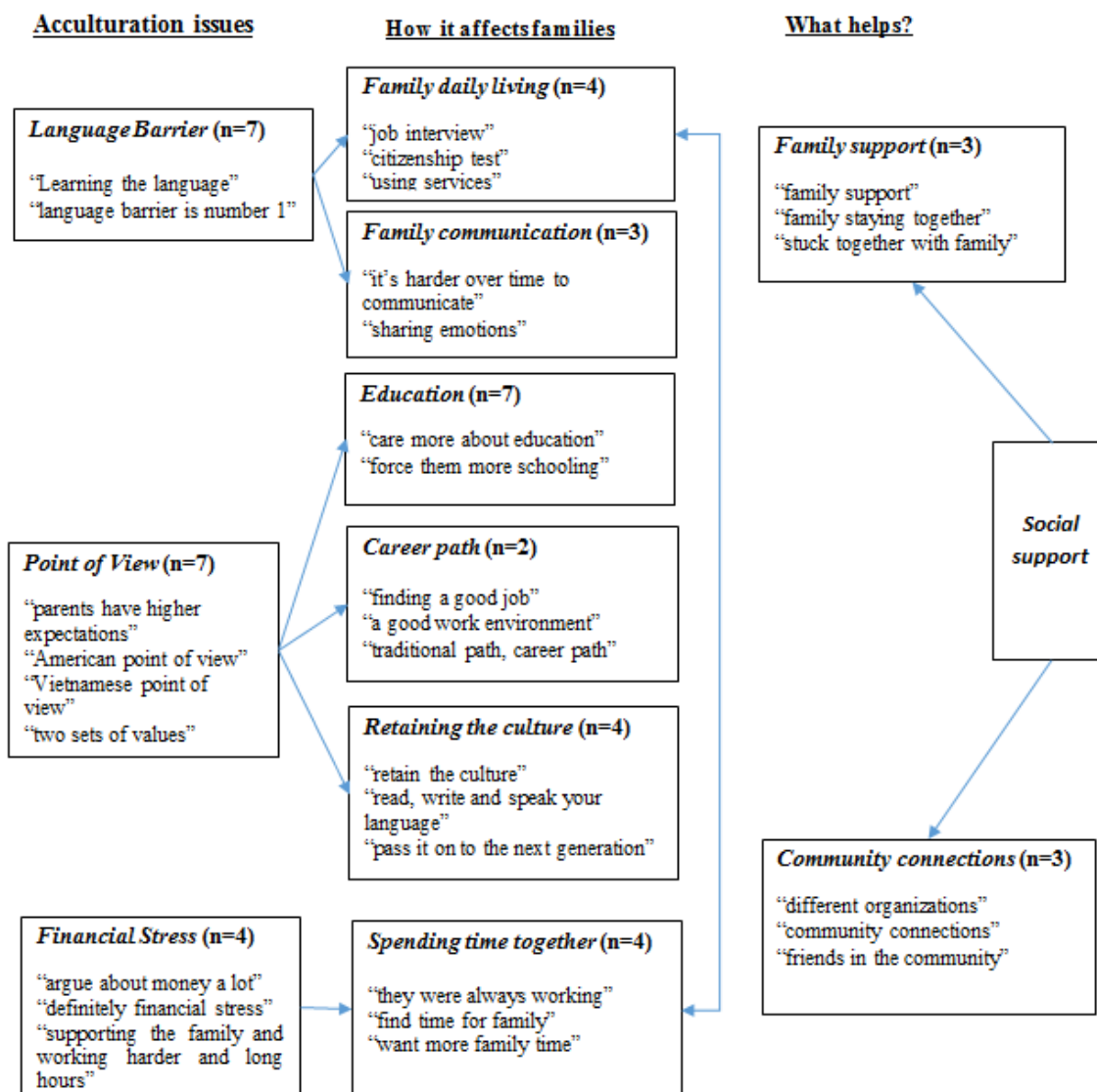


Figure 19. Qualitative themes relating to acculturation, stress and refugee family functioning

Point of view. The second domain that all participants mention is *point of view* (n=7), which encompasses differences in cultural values and beliefs between parents and children. Children often recognize that they are growing up with *two sets of values*, which are sometimes *disjointed* (Danh, age 24). For example, Sang perceives his parent as having a *Vietnamese point of view*, and himself as having an *American point of view*

(Male youth, age 25). Diem echoes this, stating that Vietnamese parents tend to have a *traditional view* and Vietnamese children tend to have a more *modern view* in life

(Female youth, age 25). These different perspectives give rise to divergent expectations between parents and children, relating to a) *education* (n=7), b) *career path* (n=2), and c) *retaining the culture* (n=4).

Both parents and youth recognize the importance of *education* as a vehicle for upward mobility and integration into American culture; however, youth are more likely to talk about it as a source of stress. For example, Scott comments, “right now, I’m most stressful about school” (Male youth, age 17). Another youth explains, “it’s education and being successful is still very important, and all parents want that for their kids, especially Asian parents” (Diem, age 25). Parents also recognize that school is a source of stress for children. For example, Phu states that Vietnamese parents often “try to force [their children] more schooling...and hope their generation do better than the one we had” (Father, age 50).

Relating to education are values and beliefs about *career path*. Parents and children have different expectations about the appropriate career that should be pursued. One youth states, “in the end, we know they want what’s best for us, and we all, in the end, see the same goals, but getting there, there’s always differences between us” (Scott, age 17). When asked to elaborate, he adds, “my parents argue about finding a higher paying job, but I worry more about finding a good work environment, something meaningful”. He understands that his parents only want him to “be successful in the end and not worry about money”, and he understands why they want that for him, but he has

a different view of success. Diem supports this sentiment, stating, “I think kids now are probably more wanting to explore different options, not just the traditional path, career path, that their parents want them to go” (Female youth, age 25).

A third source of tension between parents and children are expectations about *retaining the culture*. Vietnamese parents express their wishes for their children to retain their *cultural heritage* and *native language*. When asked why this was important, participants state that “it’s who we are” (Sinh, age 25). One mother adds, “It’s part of our culture. We want [the children] to blend with the Americans too, but we also don’t want them to lose their heritage. Be proud of who they are” (My, age 32). Vietnamese children often feel this pressure. Scott comments, “I can speak Vietnamese, but it’s not perfect, and I’m okay with that, but I would think they want me to do better” (Male youth, age 17). Another youth further elaborates on the challenge of trying to fulfill these parental wishes: “being able to read, write and speak your language in itself was hard. I can only speak. I can barely read and I cannot write. And I think that’s a big struggle” (Sinh, age 25). Another aspect of maintaining the culture is in personal relationships and focusing on future generations. For example, Scott comments that Vietnamese parents “still want the kids to speak Vietnamese and marry a Vietnamese woman, and you know just keep the culture alive, and to teach their grandkids Vietnamese” (Male youth, age 17).

Financial stress. Finally, the third theme, mentioned by four of the seven participants, is *financial stress*. According to Sinh, parents often try to “support the family, and working harder and long hours to have enough income to support kids who are growing up and needing more things” (Male youth, age 25). He recalls that when he

was younger, his parents *argued about money a lot*, simply because it was difficult for them to find good paying jobs. They also struggled to find a balance between working and raising their children. One mother explains this struggle, stating that *money* was often a source of stress for her family. She reflects, “it seems like you never have enough and you’re always trying to provide for your children” (My, age 32).

Financial stress is important because it affects how families *spend time* together (n=4). Daisy reflects, “it’s a lot harder...to find time for family...during the school year” (Female youth, age 15). Parents also recognize this as well. One mother comments, “I think kids look at it like we want more family time...You’re not giving me enough attention... That kind of thing. It’s a hard struggle” (My, age 32). Another youth describes his growing up experiences, stating “[my parents] never went to my parent-teacher conferences, simply because they never understood, and that was stressful for me as a kid, that I never got to participate in the normal things you want to do at school” (Sinh, age 25). He further reflects on the paradox that “parents stressed education, but they could not fully participate in [his] education”, by attending important functions such as conferences.

Social support. What helps with the acculturation challenges and the stress is having a strong social support system, this includes both *family support* (n=3) and *community connections* (n=3). One youth describes his parents’ struggles, “It was hard at first, but you know they stuck together with family, and what not, and they got through it” (Scott, age 17). Another youth further reflects, “I think that’s also where the community connections come in...when we don’t know how to do things, then we tend

to rely on outside of our family members and we tend to rely on friends in the community” (Danh, age 24).

Acculturation changes across time. Even though Vietnamese parents and children both describe areas of tension and conflict related to being part of two cultures, these stressors also change over time. For example, Danh reflects:

“I’m very different from my parents. Even though on the surface, I tried to be similar to them to make it easier.... It was really hard when I was younger, because of that internal struggle, but as I grew older, I think that same differences are what has helped us to become closer... When we got older, they realized that they don’t have all the skills that they need to function in American society, and we had that, and I think that the differences then helped us function better as a family”. - (Female youth, age 24).

She recognizes that there were differences between her and her parents. When she was younger, these *differences were something to be ashamed of and embarrassed* about, because her parents were more concerned about raising her so that she does not *lose touch* with her cultural heritage. She felt the internal struggle between pleasing her parents and fitting in with mainstream society. For some time, she *drifted away* from her cultural heritage, but now she said, “I feel more rooted in my heritage, because now it’s something that I can be proud of, where as before, it was something that always. It was always something that made me sticks out, and I didn’t like it” (Female youth, age 24).

CHAPTER 5: INTEGRATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: Length of Residence, Educational Levels and Acculturation Gaps

This study contributes to the literature by providing an in-depth examination of how different acculturation gaps affect family functioning from the perspectives of parent-youth dyads. First, the results show that children's and parents' demographic variables affect the acculturation gaps differently. Children's demographic characteristics generally predict the gaps in heritage domains and parents' demographic variables tend to predict host society domains. For example, both the children's length of residence and education levels predict the gap in Vietnamese language competency. Both the parents' length of residence and education level predict the gap in American language competency. The linguistic domains have greater predictive relationships, while the general acculturation domains contain fewer significant relationships. This supports the conclusion that language plays an important role in acculturation (Kang, 2006).

Results also point to the directional changes in different acculturation domains between parents and children. As children live in the U.S. for longer periods of time, they tend to drift further away from their native language. However, children who receive more education show a smaller gap in linguistic differences with their parents. On the other hand, the longer parents live in the U.S. and the more education they receive, the more they are able to narrow the gap in American linguistic competency with their children.

The quantitative results show that education helps to bridge the gap in acculturation between parents and children. Qualitative themes also highlight the importance of education in Vietnamese families. As Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) suggest, education facilitates the acquisition of language competency; therefore, this explains why it would narrow the acculturation gap.

Research Question 2: Acculturation Gaps, Perceived Stress and Family Functioning.

Contrary to some existing studies, acculturation gaps do not seem to have a negative effect on family functioning. In this study, the gaps in both Vietnamese and American acculturation positively predict family functioning in the simple models (Figure 6 and Figure 7) and the full model (Figure 18, with the exception of the gap in Vietnamese acculturation). In general, larger acculturation gaps are associated with better family functioning. This may seem difficult to interpret; however, as Lau et al. (2005) point out, acculturation gaps are common in immigrant families, but this does not necessarily lead to family dysfunction or maladjustment. Smokowski, Rose and Bacallao (2008) further made the distinction between *acculturation conflicts* and *acculturation gaps*. *Acculturation conflicts* describe ‘the stress inherent in being caught between cultural systems’, but *acculturation gaps* simply describe ‘differences between parents’ and adolescents’ levels of involvement in different cultures’ (Smokowski et al., 2008, p. 305). Acculturation gaps do not always produce acculturation conflicts. In fact, there may be some benefits, particularly in the case where the parents have not been acculturated, and where the children can help by serving as a cultural broker.

The qualitative findings also emphasize that acculturation is a dynamic concept that undergoes changes. As Danh poignantly states: “It was really hard when I was younger, because of that internal struggle, but as I grew older, I think that same differences are what has helped us to become closer” (Female youth, age 24). She refers to the fact that her acculturation process changed across time. Now that she is older, her parents recognize that she has strengths in adapting to American culture that they do not have. In some ways, family members begin to appreciate each other’s differences and appreciate both cultures as well (Xie, Xia, & Zhou, 2004). This is consistent with the characteristic of the sample in this study, as the average age of youth respondents is around 20 years. Since most of the youth are quite older, their families may have progressed into this stage of appreciating acculturative differences.

Zhou (2001), who found that Vietnamese youth acculturation pattern is not characterized by a process of de-ethnicization, where they abandon their ethnic identity and adopt an American identity, also supports these acculturative changes. In fact, over 20% of youth participants in her study, who initially self-identify exclusively as Vietnamese eventually switch to Vietnamese-American when asked three years later. Moreover, all youth who first self-identify as American also switched to either Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American or Asian American at Time 2. Zhou (2001) concludes that this illustrates ethnic resiliency. This finding is consistent with another longitudinal study by Gil and Vega (1996), who found that acculturation conflicts between Cuban and Nicaraguan parents and youth are highest between 3 to 10 years of being in the U.S. However, levels of conflict begin to decrease after that. This could

potentially explain the results from this study, as the average length of residence for the participants was around 22 years.

In the simple APIM model (Figure 17), children's perceived stress has a negative impact on their own reports of family functioning. The qualitative findings also support this. Although both parents and children described experiencing a certain level of stress, children feel the added pressure of fulfilling their parents' expectations, as well as, conforming to mainstream society. They feel that their parents have high expectations, but because of life and work demands, their parents are not around to help them navigate the cultural changes.

However, the negative effect of perceived stress on family functioning does not remain consistent. In the full model (Figure 18), neither the parents' nor the children's perceived stress predict family functioning. Overall, there is no support for the acculturation gap-distress hypothesis. Acculturative differences between parents and children do not result in poorer family functioning through stress. The results do show that differences in cultural and linguistic competency between parents and children have stronger influences on family functioning above the effect of general perceived stress.

The insignificant indirect effects may be related to the measure of perceived stress utilized in this study. It assesses general life stress instead of specific migratory or acculturative stressors. According to Liebkind (1996), the refugee acculturation process is influenced by some unique pre-migratory experiences, such as the trauma of war and personal losses. It is also impacted by the social context of the receiving community. The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the acculturation gaps on family functioning; therefore, a measure of general life stressor was used as the

mediator to avoid the confounding effect of acculturation gaps with acculturative stressors. Future studies could add measures of acculturative stressors in order to see whether general life stressors or acculturative stressors have more of an effect on refugee family functioning. In addition, financial stress emerges as a salient theme from the qualitative data. However, the PSS did not assess this area. Future study could also explore this topic further to see its impact of children and families.

This study contributes to current understandings of how acculturation influences family functioning by a) examining the perspectives of family dyads, b) across different acculturation domains and, c) using multiple types of data. Qualitative data enhance the results by revealing the influence of acculturative changes across time over the life course. Understandings of how families adapt and recognize differences as strengths also emerge through the qualitative findings.

Limitations

There are several existing limitations in this study. The first is language. There are numerous languages spoken within the refugee population. Due to limited resources and various recruitment difficulties as described above, the surveys and interviews were available only in English. The interviews were conducted with participants who could speak sufficient English. This undoubtedly affected the sample and subsequent results of the study. Secondly, many of the surveys were completed without the presence of the researcher. Therefore, it was difficult to ascertain whether survey questions were answered truthfully by the participants.

In terms of participants' responses, the same measures were given to parents and youth. As the sample statistics indicate, youth in this study range in age from 13 to 28

years, with about one-third between the age of 18 or younger. Therefore, there may be differences in their levels of understanding, as well as, other age-related issues. For example, many of the missing data came from youth who were unable to respond to the question '*how much do you speak your heritage language/ English at work*'. Youth participants were unable to answer this question simply because they were not of working age.

Third, the small sample size may be a possible limitation of the study; however, post-hoc power analysis using G*Power3 show that there is 98% power for 82 dyads to detect a medium effect size (0.3) at the $p=0.05$ significance level (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang & Buchner, 2007). Finally, responses reflect the experiences of families in the Midwest. It may not be generalizable to other refugee communities.

Conclusions, Implications and Future Directions

In conclusion, the current study found some contradictory results that warrant further examination. First, the complex relationship between acculturation and family functioning needs to be examined in the context of time. In order to meet the guideline of sample size to parameter estimates, only length of residence and educational levels were selected for analysis. Future studies with a larger sample size should also look at the effects of age on the various acculturation gaps, because it is possible that the length of residence could be intertwined with age. For example, as youth grow older or as they live longer in the U.S., they may come to recognize the importance of their cultural heritage and may report a strong Vietnamese cultural orientation. Similarly, parents may also report stronger orientation towards American culture the longer they live in the U.S. Therefore, age and length of residence may affect ratings along these two prominent

dimensions. Future studies could examine to see which of the two time variables has more of an influence on acculturation. Researchers may need to develop new survey items that assess the qualitative differences between different acculturation identity or statuses. For example, in addition to having items such as: *I'm proud of my cultural heritage* or *I'm proud of being American*, there should also be items such as: *I'm proud to be Vietnamese American* or *I watch Vietnamese American T.V.*

Secondly, youth's level of stress has significant effects on family functioning. The qualitative findings show that having social support could alleviate some of the negative effects of stress; however, youth also report in the interviews that they felt a lack of support from their family. They understand that their parents care about their well-being and are busy providing for their basic needs. However, the essential elements of family connections and interactions are missing. Service providers working with youth could use this finding to focus on family programming. In particular, it will be beneficial to create programs that help refugee youth navigate the sometime confusing cultural maze and balance their own developmental needs with their parents' expectations.

This study adds to current understanding of how acculturation influences family life. This has some potential implications for immigration and resettlement policies. Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) mention that family is an important context of resettlement, but considers the link to the community or ethnic enclaves as a stronger influence of success. Their policy recommendations, therefore, focus on fostering and strengthening community organizations and activities. However, results of this study call for more emphasis on examining both the effects policies have on families as well as the effects families have on policies. The qualitative findings allude to the discord in family

relationships during the early part of resettlement due to acculturative differences between family members. Therefore, policies encouraging integration must take into account how families may be impacted if not all family members can be integrated at the same time. Secondly, quantitative results show that at some point in time or development, families are able to overcome the gap in acculturation. The qualitative findings highlight the promotion of both community connections and family cohesion. The findings point to the need to begin with the parent-child relationship by promoting parental involvement, family engagement and communication.

Additionally, educational levels and length of residence are found to have an influence on the acculturation gaps. Future studies should examine this further and look at community-level factors or resettlement policy factors that impact family acculturation. For instance, would resettling refugee groups who share similar geographical or cultural orientations promote positive acculturation?

Finally, numerous quantitative studies have examined acculturation in immigrant families, fewer qualitative studies exist to provide a deeper understand of this acculturation process. The qualitative findings from this study support the quantitative survey results by highlighting this complex process through the perspectives of parents and youth. Their responses highlight the fact that social phenomenon are rarely static concepts. More mixed methods studies are needed to gain a better understanding of what and how acculturation changes across the life span. Such findings would allow social scientists and practitioners to identify factors that promote family well-being in the acculturative context.

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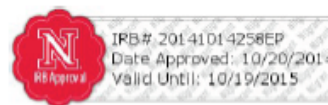
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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies

ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM *Acculturation and Stress in Refugee Families*

Dear Participant,

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study looking at how stress and acculturation affect family functioning in refugee families. You are invited to participate because you are 19 years and older and were born in the United States or came to the U.S. as a Sudanese or Vietnamese refugee.

Procedures: There are two parts to this study. The first part is a survey and the second part is an interview. You can decide whether you want to do ONLY THE SURVEY or BOTH THE SURVEY AND THE INTERVIEW. The survey will take about 20 to 30 minutes. It has some questions about your stress level, your ethnic and cultural orientation or acculturation, and your family. If you want to do the interview, it will ask you to share your experience taking the survey, and it will take about 10 to 15 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to make it easier for analysis later on.

Risks, Benefits and Compensations: There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. If there is any discomfort or problems from participating in this study, psychological counseling is available on a sliding fee scale at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center - Telephone: 402-472-2351.

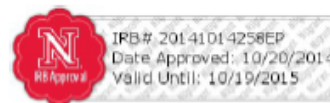
You will receive \$5 for taking the time to fill out the survey and an additional \$5 if you would like to do the follow-up interview. There are no direct benefits to you, but your responses will help us understand how stress and acculturation affect family functioning. This information is valuable to create or improve programs and services that work directly with refugee families.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The survey and audio-recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and will only be seen by the researcher during the study, and for five years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as summary data.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: You may ask any questions about this study and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. The researchers' phone numbers are also listed on the following page. Please contact the researchers if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research or in the event of a research related injury.

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402)472-6965:

- if you wish to talk to someone other than the researchers to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant
- if you want to voice concerns, complaints or provide input about the research process
- in the event the study staff could not be reached.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Acculturation and Stress in Refugee Families

Freedom to Withdraw: Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent: You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT: YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE CERTIFIES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED.

- Yes, I agree to fill out the survey**
- Yes, I agree to be interviewed and to be audio-recorded**

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Names and Phone Numbers of the Researchers

PRIMARY RESEARCHERS

Anh Do (M.S.)
Yan Xia (Ph.D.)

Office: (402) 309-3035
Office: (402) 472-6552

APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1 of 6

Survey Questionnaire

ID #: _____

INSTRUCTIONS PART A: Every family has strengths and capabilities, although different families have different ways of using their abilities. This survey asks you to indicate whether or not your family is characterized by 26 different qualities. Please do not put your name on the survey. Each survey has an ID number, so please give your honest opinions and feelings. Remember that your family may not be like all of the statements. Please read each statement, and circle the response that is most true for your family.

How is your family like the following statements?	Not at all like my family	A little like my family	Sometimes like my family	Usually like my family	Almost always like my family
1. We make personal sacrifices if they help our family.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We usually agree about how family members should behave.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We believe that something good always comes out of even the worst situation.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We take pride in even the smallest accomplishments of family members.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We share our concerns and feelings in useful ways.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Our family sticks together no matter how difficult things get.	1	2	3	4	5
7. We usually ask for help from persons outside our family if we cannot do things ourselves.	1	2	3	4	5
8. We usually agree about the things that are important to our family.	1	2	3	4	5
9. We are always willing to "pitch in" and help each other.	1	2	3	4	5
10. We find things to do that keep our minds off our worries when something upsetting is beyond our control.	1	2	3	4	5
11. We try to look at the bright side of things no matter what happens in our family.	1	2	3	4	5
12. We find time to be together even with our busy schedules.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Everyone in our family understands the "rules" about acceptable ways to act.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Friends and relatives are always willing to help whenever we have a problem or crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Our family is able to make decisions about what to do when we have problems or concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
16. We enjoy time together even if it is doing household chores.	1	2	3	4	5
17. We try to forget our problems or concerns for a while when they seem overwhelming.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Family members listen to both sides of the story during a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5

(Continue)	Not at all like my family	A little like my family	Sometimes like my family	Usually like my family	Almost always like my family
19. We make time to get things done that we all agree are important.	1	2	3	4	5
20. We can depend on the support of each other whenever something goes wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
21. We usually talk about the different ways we deal with problems and concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Our family's relationships will outlast our material possessions.	1	2	3	4	5
23. We make decisions like moving or changing jobs for the good of all family members.	1	2	3	4	5
24. We can depend upon each other to help out when something unexpected happens.	1	2	3	4	5
25. We try not to take each other for granted.	1	2	3	4	5
26. We try to solve our problems first before asking others to help.	1	2	3	4	5

INSTRUCTIONS PART B: *The following questions ask about your feelings and thoughts during THE PAST MONTH. In each question, you will be asked HOW OFTEN you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are small differences between them. Please treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the exact number of times you felt a particular way, but tell me the answer that in general seems best.*

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Fairly often	Very often
1. In the past month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. In the past month, how often have you felt unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3. In the past month, how often have you felt nervous or stressed?	0	1	2	3	4
4. In the past month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
5. In the past month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
6. In the past month, how often have you found that you could not cope with the things you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
7. In the past month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
8. In the past month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
9. In the past month, how often have you been angry because of things that happened that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
10. In the past month, how often have you felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

INSTRUCTIONS PART C: Please use the following ratings to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements. Please circle your response

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I was raised in a way that was consistent with my heritage culture	1	2	3	4	5
2. When I was growing up, I was exposed to my heritage culture.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Now, I am exposed to my heritage culture.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Compared to how much I negatively criticized other culture, I criticize my heritage culture less.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am embarrassed/ ashamed of my heritage culture	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am proud of my heritage culture.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My heritage culture has had a positive impact on my life.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I believe that my children should read, write, and speak my heritage language.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have a strong belief that my children should have names from my heritage culture only.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I go to places where people are of my heritage culture.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am familiar with practices and customs of my heritage culture.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I relate to my partner or spouse in ways that are consistent with my heritage culture.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I admire people who are from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would prefer to live in a community of my cultural heritage	1	2	3	4	5
15. I listen to music from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I performance dances from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I engage in forms of recreation of my cultural heritage	1	2	3	4	5
18. I celebrate holidays of my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
19. At home, I eat food from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
20. At restaurants, I eat food from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
21. When I was a child, my friends were from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Now, my friends are from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I wish to be accepted by people of my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The people I date are from my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Overall, I am a person of my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5

Please use the following ratings to answer the following questions. Please circle your response

	Not at all	A little	Some what	Much	Very much
26. How much do you speak your heritage language <i>at home</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
27. How much do you speak your heritage language <i>at school</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
28. How much do you speak your heritage language <i>at work</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
29. How much do you speak your heritage language <i>at prayer</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
30. How much do you speak your heritage language <i>with friends</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
31. How much do you view, read, or listen to your heritage language <i>on TV</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
32. How much do you view, read, or listen to your heritage language in <i>films or movies</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
33. How much do you view, read, or listen to your heritage language <i>on the radio</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
34. How much do you view, reading, or listen to your heritage language <i>in literature or books</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
35. How fluently do you <i>speak</i> your heritage language?	1	2	3	4	5
36. How fluently do you <i>read</i> your heritage language?	1	2	3	4	5
37. How fluently do you <i>write</i> in your heritage language?	1	2	3	4	5
38. How fluently do you <i>understand</i> your heritage language?	1	2	3	4	5

Please use the following ratings to indicate how much you agree with the statements. Please circle your response

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I was raised in a way that was American.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When I was growing up, I was exposed to American culture.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Now, I am exposed to American culture.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Compared to how much I negatively criticized other culture, I criticize American culture less.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am embarrassed/ ashamed of American culture.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am proud of American culture.	1	2	3	4	5
7. American culture has had a positive impact on my life.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I believe that my children should read, write, and speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have a strong belief that my children should have American names only.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I go to places where people are American.	1	2	3	4	5

(Continue)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I am familiar with American cultural practices and customs.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I relate to my partner or spouse in ways that is American.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I admire people who are American.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would prefer to live in an American community.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I listen to American music.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I performance American dance.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I engage in American forms of recreation.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I celebrate American holidays.	1	2	3	4	5
19. At home, I eat American food.	1	2	3	4	5
20. At restaurants, I eat American food.	1	2	3	4	5
21. When I was a child, my friends were American.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Now, my friends are American.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I wish to be accepted by Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The people I date are Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Overall, I am American.	1	2	3	4	5

Please use the following ratings to answer the following questions. Please circle your response.

	Not at all	A little	Some what	Much	Very much
26. How much do you speak English <i>at home</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
27. How much do you speak English <i>at school</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
28. How much do you speak English <i>at work</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
29. How much do you speak English <i>at prayer</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
30. How much do you speak English <i>with friends</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
31. How much do you view, read, or listen to English <i>on TV</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
32. How much do you view, read, or listen to English <i>in films or movies</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
33. How much do you view, read, or listen to English <i>on the radio</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
34. How much do you view, reading, or listen to English <i>in literature or books</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5

(Continue)	Not at all	A little	Some what	Much	Very much
35. How fluently do you <i>speak</i> English?	1	2	3	4	5
36. How fluently do you <i>read</i> English language?	1	2	3	4	5
37. How fluently do you <i>write</i> in English?	1	2	3	4	5
38. How fluently do you <i>understand</i> English?	1	2	3	4	5

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: _____

3. Racial/ ethnic background: Sudanese/ Sudanese American Vietnamese/ Vietnamese American

4. What languages can you speak? (Please list all). _____

5. How long have you lived in the United States? _____ years

6. Including yourself, how many people are in your family? _____

7. Education

- Some high school or less
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree (Masters or Ph.D.)

8. Estimated Annual or Yearly Income:

- \$20,000 or less
- \$21,000 - \$40,000
- \$41,000-\$60,000
- \$61,000 or more

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

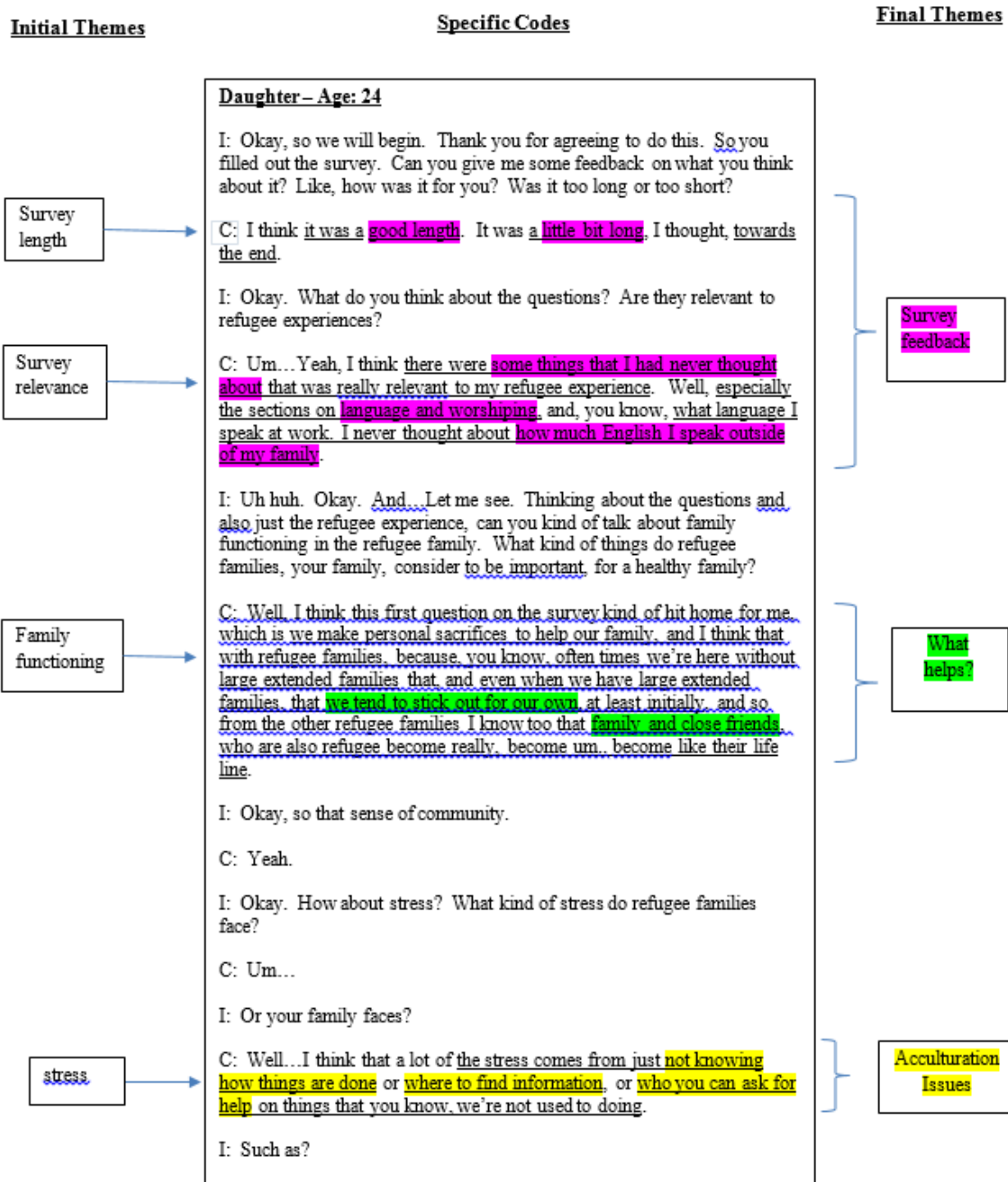
Primary Question

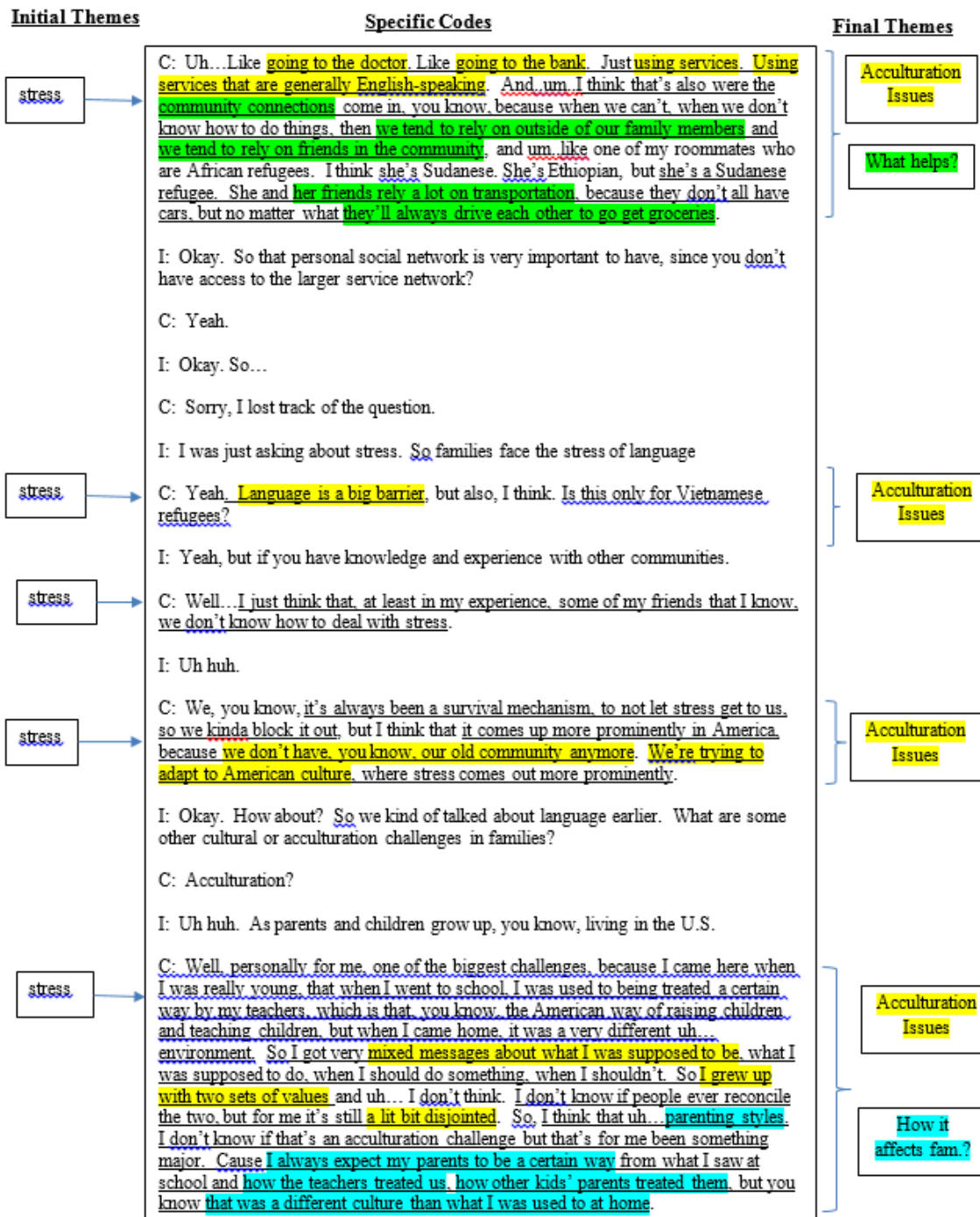
Please describe your experience taking the survey and your thoughts about the survey items.

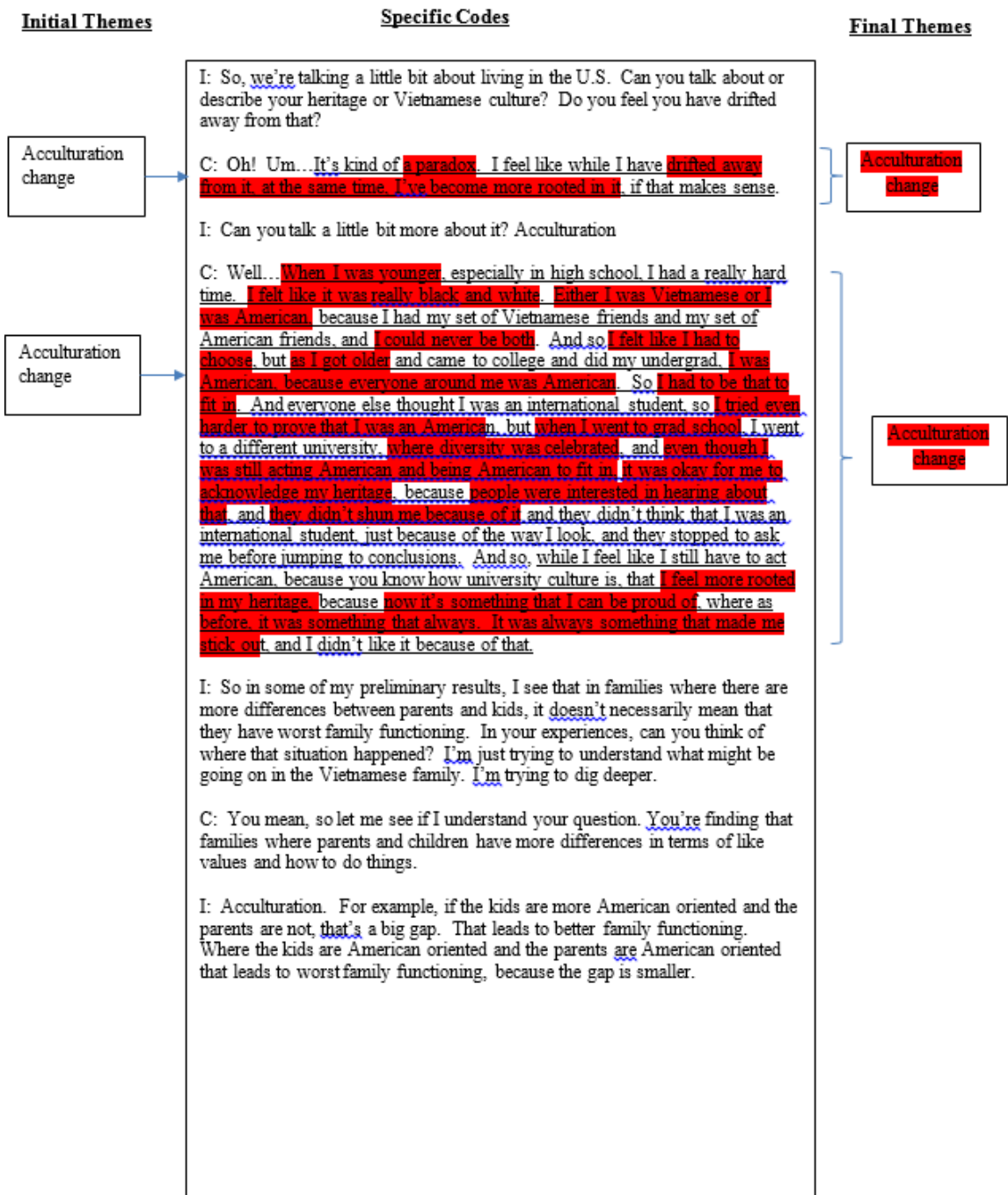
Sub-Questions or Probing Questions

1. What do you think about the survey questions?
 2. Did the survey questions reflect your experience as a refugee?
 3. Did the survey questions accurately describe refugee families?
 4. Did the survey questions accurately describe stress that refugee families often face?
 5. Did the survey questions accurately describe cultural challenges that refugee families often face?
-

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE CODING SCHEME







Initial Themes**Specific Codes****Final Themes**