

# Exploring the Literacy Beliefs of Refugee Mothers: Implications for Research and Practice

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*The aim of this study was to utilize an exploratory and descriptive lens to examine the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers of preschool aged children, who were enrolled in a refugee family literacy program (n=19). Through use of a survey, mothers' literacy beliefs as related to the home literacy environment and schooling were examined. Results indicated that on average, even though the mothers expressed beliefs that parents should be somewhat involved in their children's education, they also expressed it was more the role of the school to prepare children academically. The results of this study indicate a contrast between the literacy beliefs of the refugee mothers who participated in the study and the traditional parent/family involvement paradigm prevalent in many U.S. schools. Implications for research and educational practice are discussed.*

*Keywords: refugee, literacy, family literacy, culture*

Many American schools have received a growing number of refugee students. Evidence indicates that refugee children constituted 50% of the global refugee population in 2013, as compared to 46% in 2012. That makes the 2013 figure for refugee children the highest in a decade, suggesting that one in every two refugees is a child (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Statistical Yearbook, 2013). These statistics are important to consider, as recent efforts to improve children's literacy outcomes have focused on developing greater partnerships and awareness for parents supporting their children's literacy development at home. Yet in considering the refugee child's experience (i.e., trauma, disrupted or no education), it must be taken into account that educating an uprooted child may be difficult and requires coordination from various entities working together (Prior & Niesz, 2013).

The argument for paying closer attention to this group is also due to the difficulties that some refugees face regarding resettlement and adjusting to the prevailing parent/family norms of U.S. schools apparent within cultural expectations of engagement (Mapp & Kutner, 2013; Prior & Niesz, 2013; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Recognizing difficulties related to resettlement is important for teachers as they try to make sense of particular groups' ideas, language, social behaviors, and expectations, in order to guide their instructional practices. Due to teachers not recognizing these difficulties, their skills have been questioned pertaining to their ability to adequately approach the growing diversity of children in mainstream classrooms, including refugee children who often arrive without literacy in their first language (O'Neil & Geoghegan, 2011). Furthermore, it is wise to consider the role of the family in the child's resettlement process as oftentimes parents are striving for English language acquisition as a pathway to education and social connections, in addition to adjusting to cultural norms. Therefore, in approaching the education of a refugee child, it is essential to first understand the lens through

which these families view literacy attainment and engagement before moving forward with instructional practices and approaches.

This study addresses the need to understand refugee families' beliefs about literacy, as a prerequisite to addressing the literacy needs of refugee students. Within this study, mothers' beliefs are used as a proxy for families' beliefs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide an exploratory lens into the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers of preschool-aged children. The motivation for focusing on refugee mothers of young children is based on two common findings within literacy research. The first includes the finding of a consistent relationship between the home literacy environment and emergent literacy skills during the preschool years, as a precursor to subsequent reading achievement (August & Shanahan, 2006; Chen, Pisani, White, & Soroui, 2012; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The second finding involves a demonstrated relationship between mothers' literacy beliefs and their preschool children's emergent literacy skills (Newland, Gapp, Jacobs, Reisetter, Syed, & Wu, 2011; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006b). However, amongst these considerably major findings, none of the studies have included diverse populations such as refugees. With these thoughts in mind, this study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) What are the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers related to the home literacy environment?
- 2) What are the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers related to schooling?

This paper is divided into four main sections. First, it begins with an overview of relevant literature. Second, the methodology is discussed. Third, the findings of the study are presented. Fourth, the paper concludes with a discussion of the major findings, implications, and limitations of the study.

## **Review of the Literature**

This section begins by exploring the literature pertaining to beliefs about the home literacy environment as it relates to family culture. It then reviews the literature on mothers' literacy beliefs.

### **Home Literacy Experiences and Culture**

Within the emergent literacy perspective, children formulate foundational skills throughout early childhood, well before they receive any formal education (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). During this stage, even though children cannot read and write in the conventional sense, there are prerequisite oral language experiences that facilitate later reading acquisition (August & Shanahan, 2006; Chen et al., 2012; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). These early experiences involve activities such as following along in a book as an adult reads, telling a story from a drawing, identifying familiar print in the environment, letter naming, and rhyming (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The emergent literacy perspective serves as a rationale for the stated importance of the home literacy environment. Reading researchers and educational professionals urge parents to be involved in their children's literacy learning from an early age by engaging in literacy-related tasks such as shared book reading and having conversations (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006a; Yeo, Ong, & Ng, 2014). It has been found that children who enter school without exposure to these experiences tend to be further behind as readers than their peers who had such exposure (Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

Guided by the emergent literacy perspective, the role of parents in school readiness as it pertains to literacy has become a prevalent norm and expectation in U.S. schools (Chen et al., 2012). These norms have been further supported by considerable research findings that indicate the important role of the home literacy environment in the development of children's emergent

literacy. These findings delineate how different aspects of the home literacy environment impact different literacy skills (Sénéchal & Young, 2008; Weigel et al., 2006a). Researchers have also studied the impact of few or low-quality home literacy experiences, and have found children in these settings to be less prepared to engage in the tasks of reading than children who received more or higher quality home literacy experiences (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Skibbe, Bindman, Hindman, Aram, & Morrison, 2013).

Since family life serves as a venue for strengthening and developing children's literacy skills, measures to balance variations in the home literacy environment have been the driving force behind schools' attempts to have universal parent involvement in education (Cairney, 2002). This has typically been advertised through the push for use of environmental print in early childhood settings, the encouragement of children and families to share home literacy within the classroom context, and the sending of school books home to families to use as a stimulus to literacy learning (Chen et al., 2012). However, of particular concern is data that has demonstrated that a majority of parents whose primary language is not English read to their children and engage in literacy activities less frequently than parents whose primary language is English (Chen et al., 2012). Therefore, a question remains regarding whether or not these intentions for parent involvement take into account the cultural diversity represented in schools. As U.S. schools ascribe to cultural norms and expectations of how parents should be involved in their child's literacy development, it is important to consider whether these norms take into consideration the various sociocultural contexts in which families hold beliefs about learning (Scott, Brown, Jean-Baptiste, & Barbarin, 2012). For example, for refugee families, acculturation is often a central issue related to resettlement as they must face life in a new culture after coming from a life of fear, uncertainty, and possibly trauma (Lustig et al., 2004). It may be safe to

assume in these instances that the priority of their thoughts regarding involvement in their children's learning may not entirely match up immediately with the aforementioned cultural norms and expectations of U.S. schools.

Therefore, to approach issues surrounding the literacy development of children from diverse backgrounds, there must be recognition of the role of both families and teachers in this process. It may be beneficial to consider literacy as a purposive instrumental activity, which may vary by culture and ethnic group (Gay, 2010). For example, in some cultures emphasis may not be placed on emergent literacy constructs such as shared reading or having a print-rich environment, however there may be another cultural context by which literacy is taught and emphasized, such as oral narratives (Reyes, Da Silva Iddings & Feller, 2016). Many parents who are not from the U.S. may be unfamiliar with the workings and routines of schools, and may not have had the opportunity to develop the social and cultural understandings that are promoted in these environments, such as the importance of emergent literacy or the home literacy environment (Scott et al., 2012).

### **Mothers' Literacy Beliefs**

Studies have also demonstrated connections between mothers' literacy beliefs and children's literacy development (Newland et al., 2011; Weigel et al., 2006b). In a longitudinal study, Weigel et al. (2006b) found that that mothers who had higher literacy beliefs (as evidenced through engagement in their own literacy practices and modeling the importance of literacy through these types of practices) had richer home literacy environments than mothers who had lower literacy beliefs (were less engaged in literacy activities and did not stress the importance of literacy in the home). This study demonstrated a distinct connection between

mothers' thoughts and experiences with literacy and also indicated higher literacy achievement of children whose mothers demonstrated more positive literacy beliefs.

Similarly, other studies have found that parent beliefs are directly associated to their motivations for involvement in their child's literacy activities (Newland et al., 2011). For example, Newland et al. (2011) indicated that when the mothers in their study believed as though they were able to positively contribute to their child's learning, there was substantial involvement in early literacy activities in the home and higher achievement in their children's literacy. Additionally, researchers such as Phillips and Lonigan (2009) and Weigel et al. (2006a), found that parents' reading beliefs played a central role in children's literacy and language development. Although studies have found associations between mother's beliefs and children's literacy development, a limitation of these studies is that the populations studied do not reflect the growing diversity apparent in schools that include those such as refugee children and their families. However, even within these findings it is imperative to give further thought to how culturally embedded literacy practices are, and how this may impact the types of beliefs mothers hold about literacy (Gay, 2010). It is essential to understand the literacy beliefs of mothers from different cultures, especially as they pertain to what is expected from teachers and even greater, U.S. schools. Having this knowledge may afford educational professionals the opportunity to then consider if in fact there is a mismatch, in light of families' cultural beliefs. Due to the lack of literature surrounding this topic, this study sought to gain an understanding of the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers of preschool-aged children, from an exploratory perspective.

## Methods

This study used a survey as the primary means for collecting data. The following section provides a description of the participants included in the study and the measures used in the study.

### Participants

Participants included 19 mothers who were enrolled in a refugee family literacy program, a nonprofit school where refugee mothers and their young children learn together. The family literacy program offers English as a Second or other Language (ESOL) classes for refugee women and an early childhood development program for their young children. The research site of the study was selected due to the type of program that was offered, as there are very few programs in the demographic area where the research took place that focus on refugee women and their children's foundational education. As the refugee family literacy program offers literacy classes of varying proficiency levels, one particular class was used in the study. The selection of the class was based on the recommendation of the program director due to the mothers in this class having basic to above basic English proficiency. The mothers were invited to participate through an announcement made in their literacy class. Participation was voluntary, and participants signed informed consent forms prior to being interviewed.

The mothers ranged in age between 23 and 41 years ( $m=29$ ,  $SD=4.9$ ), and had at least one preschool-aged child enrolled in the program (ages 2-4). The children attended a preschool program at the center while the mothers were in classes. Mothers' educational level ranged from no education to some college, with the average (52%) completing at least middle school in their home country. The majority of the mothers were from Burma ( $n = 10$ ), with others being from Thailand ( $n = 3$ ), Eritrea ( $n = 2$ ), Iran ( $n = 2$ ), and South Sudan ( $n = 2$ ). All of the mothers were



relatively recent refugees; none lived in the United States for more than 10 years. The majority of the mothers had lived in the United States between 1 and 5 years ( $n = 13$ ). Four of the mothers lived in the U.S. less than 1 year, and 2 of the mothers lived in the U.S. for 5-10 years.

### **Measures**

Data collection through face-to-face surveys provided information regarding mothers' literacy beliefs and perceptions about literacy learning in the school context. It was important for the surveys to be face-to-face to ensure that the mothers understood the questions that were being asked and for the researcher to be able to provide follow-up statements if necessary. The literacy beliefs survey was conceptualized by the researcher through the evaluation of similar surveys previously used in research (DeBaryshe & Binder, 1994; Weigel et al., 2006b). The survey questions were designed in alignment with the purpose of the study to ensure that the goals of the study were being met. Prior to implementation, the survey was tested for reliability. The literacy beliefs scale demonstrated good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .80$ ), meaning there was agreement between items on the survey. A sample question was provided to the mothers prior to beginning the actual survey, to ensure they understood the format for responding to the questions.

The purpose of the survey was explained to the mothers and they were asked if there were any questions. The mothers were asked to agree or disagree at a particular level (disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree) with statements such as, "I am my child's most important teacher," "reading is a special time," "children learn new words, colors, etc. from books," and "I want to help my child with reading but do not know how."

### **Results**

The study's aim was to investigate the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers about the home literacy environment and schooling. As this study was exploratory in nature, and a first look into

this area of research, various descriptive analyses were undertaken in order to provide insight into the refugee mothers' beliefs about literacy. With consideration for the study's research questions, first, descriptive statistics are provided to summarize the mothers' average responses on the literacy beliefs survey. Second, results are presented that represent the average percentage of the mothers' responses to questions about literacy and the home literacy environment. Lastly, results are provided that demonstrate the average percentage of mothers' responses to questions about literacy and schooling.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the mothers' responses on the literacy beliefs scale. On average, the mothers' responses indicated a higher emphasis on schools preparing their children with less emphasis on the role of parents in the home. This is evidenced through the mean responses on questions related to the home literacy environment and schooling (See Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

#### *Mothers' Literacy Beliefs Related to Home Literacy Environment*

	M	SD
Reading with my child is a special time that we share	3.9	.45
My child learns lessons from books that we read	2.6	1.0
Even if I would like to, I am too tired or busy to read with my child	3.6	.50
Children learn new words, colors, etc. from books we read	3.0	.62
I would like to help my child but I don't know how	4.0	.33
My child learns many important things from me	2.8	.50
Reading helps children become better talkers and listeners	2.5	.90
My child learns lessons and morals from books	2.6	.60
I find it difficult to read to my child	3.8	.42
My child is too young to learn about reading	3.7	.80
I don't read to my child because we have nothing to read	1.6	.95
I don't read to my child because I have more important things to do as a parent	3.5	.51

*5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = somewhat agree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 1 = disagree*

Table 2

*Mothers' Literacy Beliefs Related to Schooling*

	M	SD
I am my child's most important teacher	2.8	1.2
Parents should teach children to read before they enter school	2.3	1.1
There is little I can do to help my child get ready for school	3.4	.83
Schools are responsible for teaching (working with) children, not parents	3.9	.62
Children do better at school when their parents also teach them things at home	2.6	1.1
The teacher will teach my child everything my child needs to know	4.0	.52
Parents need to be involved in their child's education	3.0	.52
As a parent, I play an important role in my child's schooling	3.0	.33

*5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = somewhat agree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 1 = disagree*

**Mothers' Responses**

Survey results are provided based on the percentage of responses to questions related to the home literacy environment. Based on the results below (Table 3), the majority of the mothers (79%) indicated that reading was a special time they could share with their child, yet there were barriers that prevented them from reading with their child, such as being too busy or tired (63% agreed) or finding it difficult to read with their child (79% agreed). Furthermore, results indicated that the majority of the mothers did not fully agree that their child learned (53% somewhat agreed, 63% somewhat agreed) or benefited (63% somewhat agreed) from books being read, or was old enough to learn about reading (79% agreed).

Table 3

*Mother's Literacy Beliefs Related to the Home Literacy Environment*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
Reading with my child is a special time that we share.	5%	79%	16%	0%	0%
My child learns lessons from books that we read.	0%	16%	53%	10%	21%
Even if I would like to, I am just too tired and busy to read with my child.	0%	63%	37%	0%	0%
Children learn new words, colors, etc. from books we read.	0%	21%	63%	16%	0%
I would like to help my child but I don't know how.	5%	90%	5%	0%	0%
My child learns many important things from me.	0%	5%	74%	21%	0%
Reading helps children become better talkers and listeners.	0%	5%	63%	11%	21%
My child learns lessons and morals from books.	0%	5%	53%	42%	0%
I find it difficult to read to my child.	0%	79%	21%	0%	0%
My child is too young to learn about reading.	0%	79%	21%	0%	0%
I don't read to my child because we have nothing to read.	0%	5%	16%	16%	63%
I don't read to my child because I have more important things to do as a parent.	0%	53%	47%	0%	0%

Survey results are provided based on the percentage of mother's responses to questions related to schooling. Based on the results below (Table 4), the mothers' responses emphasized the role of the school in helping their child, yet indicated beliefs of wanting to help their child, but not knowing how. There were mixed results about whether the mothers considered themselves their child's most important teacher (37% agreed, 32% somewhat agreed, 26% disagreed). Furthermore, many of the mothers' responses indicated that there was little that they

could do to help their child get ready for formal schooling (58% agreed) and that the teacher would instruct their child with everything he/she needed to know upon entering school (74% somewhat agreed). The mothers' responses also indicated that they would like to help their child but they did not know how (90% agreed).

Table 4

*Mother's Literacy Beliefs Related to Schooling*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
I am my child's most important teacher.	0%	37%	32%	5%	26%
Parents should teach children to read before they enter school.	0%	16%	26%	26%	32%
There is little I can do to help my child get ready for school.	0%	58%	21%	21%	0%
I would like to help my child but I don't know how.	5%	90%	5%	0%	0%
Schools are responsible for teaching (working with) children, not parents.	10%	80%	5%	5%	0%
Children do better at school when their parents also teach them things at home.	0%	21%	37%	21%	21%
My child is too young to learn about reading.	0%	79%	21%	0%	0%
The teacher will teach my child everything my child needs to know so I don't need to worry.	0%	16%	74%	10%	0%
Parents need to be involved in their child's education.	0%	16%	74%	10%	0%
As a parent, I play an important role in my child's schooling.	0%	5%	90%	5%	0%

### Discussion

As we consider the growing population of refugee students enrolled in U.S. schools, it is important to be aware of what they may encounter regarding prevailing norms and expectations related to parent/family involvement and student achievement. It is also important to consider if

the prevailing norms and expectations regarding parent/family involvement and children's achievement account for the diversity of thoughts, ideologies, and beliefs of families, especially those who resettle in the U.S.

The primary goal of this exploratory study was to investigate the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers conceptualized through the home literacy environment and schooling. As previous research has found connections between mothers' literacy beliefs and their children's literacy, it was a motivation of this study to recognize whether or not the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers were similar to those assumed to be held by parents in U.S. schools (Newland et al., 2011; Weigel et al., 2006b). As this area of research is limited, it is an anticipation of this study that these findings will inform future research and educational practice.

Shared reading in the U.S. culture has been portrayed by schools, educational campaigns, and legislations as a special time between parents and their children due to its varying social and academic benefits (Newland et al., 2011; Weigel et al., 2006a). Most of the mothers in this study (79%) agreed that reading with their child was a special time that they shared. However, past this notion, there were varying literacy beliefs portrayed by the mothers that may be considered contrary to the cultural perceptions and norms regarding home literacy learning in the U.S. For example, the statement "parents are their child's first teacher" has been evidenced in studies emphasizing the importance of the home literacy environment and parents engaging in school readiness activities (August & Shanahan, 2006; Chen et al., 2012; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The mothers in this study indicated that their child was too young to learn about reading (79% of the mothers agreed). The mothers had preschool-aged children, which is considered a typical age in the U.S. for the development of emergent literacy skills (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Results from this study also encourage consideration of how parental beliefs and choices, based on culture, serve as a guide for involvement in children's literacy attainment and development. There was moderate agreement (74% somewhat agreed) among study participants to the statement that their child can learn many important things from them, or learn new words, colors, or lessons from books. These results demonstrate a potential difference between prevailing parent/family involvement expectations in the U.S. compared to this population of refugee mothers resettling in the U.S. For example, many of the prevailing themes of parents being engaged in school readiness activities and being involved in their child's education and schooling has been reinforced by past legislations such as the No Child Left Behind Act and fostered through Department of Education grants and frameworks for school and family partnerships (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006; Mapp & Kutner, 2013). However, a key component missing from these expectations is consideration for the connection between parents' beliefs and their involvement in their children's literacy attainment. Results from studies such as Phillips and Lonigan (2009) and Weigel et al. (2006a), found that parents' reading beliefs played a central role in children's literacy and language development. These studies found that a determining factor related to parents' choices for engagement in elements such as the home literacy environment lies within cultural values and what parents deem important.

Additionally, the mothers' responses indicated that a lack of involvement was not due to availability of books in the home, but the responsibilities they held as mothers and finding it difficult to read with their children. Considering the structure of the home literacy environment, these results indicate a need for greater realization of family dynamics, such as different responsibilities or expectations a mother may have that could interfere with being involved with the child's education. Further thought should also be given to mothers' own literacy capabilities

and the role this factor plays in their children's literacy development. Overall, these results demonstrate a need for an in-depth look at the varying literacy beliefs that may be apparent in families, as very few home literacy environment studies have included or considered the diversity of families such as refugees who may be in the process of resettlement into a new culture.

Additional findings indicated that even though 90% of participants somewhat agreed they played a role in their child's schooling, and 74% somewhat agreed that they needed to be involved in their child's education, they viewed it as mostly the school's responsibility to teach their child (80% agreed). Many also indicated there was little they could do to help their child (58% agreed, 21% somewhat agreed). Results indicated that participants tended to believe that when their child went to school, the teacher would teach their child everything they needed to know (74% somewhat agreed, 16% agreed). As these findings provide new knowledge to a limited body of literature, they are in one sense similar to those of Singh, Sylvia, and Ridzi (2015), who found a contrast between the language and literacy practices in refugee families' homes, and a literacy program the families were involved in. Those scholars found that refugee families had limited background knowledge of the routines of American schools, and that they followed their own traditions of teaching their children their native language and oral literacy skills (Singh et al., 2015). The participants in the Singh et al. (2015) study were of the same background (Burmese) as were the majority of the participants in the current study. However, the current study contributes to the literature in that it went beyond studying the literacy beliefs of mothers from Burma to other cultures. Additionally, another important result related to schooling was the mothers' overwhelming agreement that they would like to help their child, but they do



not know how (90% agreed). This finding highlights the importance of the availability of resources such as family literacy programs, where intergenerational learning may take place.

This study also serves as a preliminary guide for future research. Based on its findings, there seems to be value in researching the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers for the purposes of understanding the dynamic views of diverse families. It is important for future studies to be conducted that provide a greater perspective into the thoughts and practices of both the families and the practitioners who work with these families. For example, few studies have been conducted that describe the struggles and complexities that teachers of refugee students experience in their effort to teach literacy to these students (Gichiru, 2014). There is a need for a deeper look into this area to also ensure that the refugee population is not being looked at from a deficit perspective, but through a lens where understanding may occur, regarding the general beliefs and practices that different families hold as they begin their resettlement process and enter into U.S. schools.

Further, this study yields implications for educational practice to better serve refugee children and their families. As there are implicit rules about parental involvement that may fuel misunderstandings between teachers and parents, the results of this study shed light on the concept that parents may approach literacy learning with different beliefs that may be different from those that teachers and U.S. schools generally ascertain. It is important for the literacy beliefs of diverse families to be considered as teachers plan their instruction and ways to communicate with families. It is important to consider that all parents may not respond to the same strategies for involvement such as sending home books or attending open houses. Additionally, it is important that there is no assumption that all parents have the same goals for their children. Specifically, teacher-parent dialogue is critical to ensure to meaningful

conversations take place about individual students' goals and how the parent may play a role. Furthermore, it may be also beneficial to inventory parents' concerns, perspectives and ideas. Oftentimes, parent surveys may capture different perspectives and may be administered through different means and translated into different languages. A survey or interview may help to understand the cultural identities and characteristics of communities such as languages spoken in the home, parents' previous schooling experiences, cultural materials or resources used in the home with the child, and so on. Lastly, it is important to understand that not speaking English as a home language does not preclude parents from having a rich home literacy environment for their children (Yeo et al., 2014). Having insight into the beliefs and practices pertaining to literacy may help teachers provide hands on support and resources to assist parents in fostering their children's literacy development in English.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations should be considered in the present study. The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature, and therefore no causations may be drawn from this data. It may be beneficial in future research to conduct experiments that may be correlational and predictive in nature, in order to have a greater understanding of the refugee mothers' literacy beliefs and their impact on the home literacy environment and their children's schooling. Additionally, a factor that contributed to the small participant sample size was the small size of the literacy program. Future researchers may consider the availability of more programming, or different types of programming, that targets larger populations of refugee mothers. Moreover, as this study included a specific population of refugee mothers from several countries (Burma, Thailand, Eritrea, Iran, and South Sudan), findings of this study may not be generalizable to other refugee mothers from other countries. As there are refugee mothers in the United States representing

various countries, it may be advantageous for future research to investigate if the results found in this study are true for other refugee population samples.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study provided an exploratory look into the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers with preschool-aged children. The rationale for conducting this study was the growing population of students of refugee background entering U.S. schools, where teachers may be unsure of how to best support the learner and the learner's family (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Miller & Mikulec, 2014). Another motivation for conducting this study lies in the notion that there are programs designed to assist refugee families in the resettlement process, yet education may need to be a greater consideration in this process. The findings of this study provide insight into an area of importance, which is considering diverse family perspectives in literacy learning. Conversely, this study highlights a need for conversations to ensure that there are common understandings between the various stakeholders involved in a child's literacy development, especially those of diverse backgrounds. This study provides a preliminary understanding of the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers. It is an exploratory element in advancing the research and practice related to understanding refugee families and their children's literacy attainment.

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