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PROMOTING FAMILY PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
AMONG REFUGEE FAMILIES THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

A Dissertation Presented

by

Gabriel T. McGann

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Specializing in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) study was to work with local stakeholders involved in the RAFT (Relationships Among Families and Teachers) Project pilot study (Haines & Reyes, 2022a) to identify the constructs necessary to understand the impacts of RAFT implementation and build a tool to assess those constructs. The Participatory Action Research Team (PART) involved in this study included school administrators, Multilingual (ML) teachers, classroom teachers, home-school liaisons, and families. The PART participated in three focus groups and eight cognitive interviews to develop an understanding of the goals of RAFT implementation and design a survey to measure the impact of RAFT using those goals. Three goals or constructs emerged that were of primary importance behind the motivation for schools and families to use the RAFT Protocol: (a) School-Family Connection, (b) Student Success, and (c) Unified Welcoming School Culture and were used to build a survey known as the Tool to Assess the RAFT Protocol (TARP). The purpose of the TARP was to increase the understanding of how the RAFT Protocol impacts relationships between refugee families and school staff. Schools and districts will use the data from the TARP to make decisions on how to allocate resources to sustain ongoing implementation of the RAFT Protocol and thereby adjust practice and policy in the classroom and district to create stronger connections with families to support their students.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Amanda, for her unending love, support, prayer, and motivation to complete this process; I would not have started this phase of life nor completed it without you.

To my children, Gideon, Kayra, and Roman, who have only known me as a graduate student and have motivated me to be a lifelong learner and opened my eyes to a world yet unseen. My family, you motivate me to be more than I believe I can be. Finally, to those who have joined our communities through the harrowing process of permanent resettlement. You are welcome here.

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To Dr. Shana Haines, who was willing to advise me in my final year and a half as I risked it all to complete this program, who offered me partnership in her work and critical feedback throughout. To Dr. Barri Tinkler, who saw fit to invite me to join this program and advise my early years. To my committee, Dr. Cynthia Reyes, Dr. Jessica Strolin-Goltzman, and Dr. Pablo Bose, you have guided my work with gentle and encouraging feedback. To my colleagues that have held me accountable to finish this process. To Dr. Peg Single-Boyle, who rescued me from many moments of despair through her expert guidance and mentorship. Finally, to my friends and colleagues who participated in this study, thank you for the inspiration that you are to me and for making access to education and relationships available to our whole community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	3
1.3 Purpose of the Research.....	5
1.4 Research Question	6
1.5 Significance	6
1.6 Format of this Dissertation	7
CHAPTER 2: COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 Overview	9
2.2 Refugees and Refugee Communities.....	9
2.2.1 Definition and Demographics of Refugee Populations.....	10
2.2.2 The Resettlement Process	11

2.3 FPPs.....	13
2.3.1 Refugee Families Want More Opportunities	15
2.3.2 A Welcoming Culture Improves FPPs.....	18
2.3.3 Organizational Vision Creates Clarity and Collaboration	20
2.3.4 Reframing Language and Communication as Barriers to Partnership	23
2.4 Conceptual Framework	26
2.4.1 Ecological Model of Human Development.....	27
2.4.2 Community-Based Participatory Action Research	29
2.4.3 Appreciative Inquiry	30
2.4.4 Conceptual Framework.....	31
CHAPTER 3: METHODS	34
3.1 Overview	34
3.2 Survey Design Methodology.....	35
3.3 Research Design.....	36
3.4 Setting and Participants	37
3.5 Data Collection Methods.....	37
3.6 Data Analysis.....	39
3.7 Researcher Positionality	41
3.8 Ethics	43
3.9 Data Credibility	45

CHAPTER 4: JOURNAL ARTICLE.....	47
4.1 Abstract.....	47
4.2 Introduction	48
4.3 Context and Literature Review.....	50
4.3.1 Definition of Refugee Populations.....	50
4.3.2 Family Professional Partnerships.....	51
4.4 Purpose of the Study.....	56
4.5 Conceptual Framework	57
4.5.1 Ecological Model of Human Development.....	57
4.5.2 Community-Based Participatory Action Research	59
4.5.3 Appreciative Inquiry	60
4.5.4 Conceptual Framework.....	61
4.6 Methods	62
4.6.1 Survey Design Methodology	63
4.6.2 Research Design.....	64
4.6.3 Setting and Participants.....	64
4.6.4 Data Collection Methods	65
4.6.5 Data Analysis	66
4.7 Results	69
4.7.1 School-Family Connection.....	69
4.7.2 Student Success.....	72
4.7.3 Unified Welcoming School Culture.....	75
4.7.4 Developing the TARP.....	78
4.8 DISCUSSION.....	82

4.8.1 Limitations	86
4.8.2 Implications for Research	86
4.9 Conclusion.....	88
References	90
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE	123
5.1 Scholarly and Practical Implications	123
5.2 Research	126
5.3 Policy and Practice	129
5.4 Limitations.....	130
5.5 Conclusion.....	131
6. COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY	134
7. APPENDICES	145
7.1 Conceptual Framework	145
7.2 Data Collection and Analysis Summary.....	146
7.3 Focus Group #1 Questioning Route	149
7.4 Focus Group #2 Questioning Route	152
7.5 Cognitive Interview Protocol	154
7.6 Focus Group #3 Questioning Route	158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Data Collection Activities and Objectives	102
Table 2: Data Analysis Activities.....	104
Table 3: Thematic Framework	105
Table 4: Preliminary Survey Questions.....	107
Table 5: Tool to Assess the RAFT Protocol (TARP).....	114

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: TARP Items Organized by Construct.....	80
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Worldwide 82.4 million people are currently forcibly displaced; of those, 26.4 million have received formal refugee status from the United Nations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020a). Of that number, only one percent of all displaced people are permanently resettled as refugees across the 27 nations providing permanent refugee resettlement (UNHCR, 2022a). Of those nations, the United States is the world's largest destination for refugee resettlement. 38% of refugees under the care of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are school-aged children (UNHCR, 2022b).

Enrolling children in local schools is one of the top priorities of refugee resettlement (UNHCR, 2022b). Yet, frequently the tools available in schools are not adequate for supporting the needs of recently resettled students (MacNevin, 2012). Although US education policy has mandated collaboration with schools and families in both the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)(ESSA, 2015; IDEA, 2004), these Federal statutes have not defined how this is to be accomplished. Therefore, all too often, schools lack clarity and training on developing and implementing these partnerships with families (Haines et al., 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Turnbull and colleagues (2022) defined Family Professional Partnerships (FPPs) as “alliances in which families and professionals confidently build on each other’s word,

judgment, and wise actions to increase educational benefits for students and themselves” (p. 9). FPPs have been shown to benefit students, families, and teachers (Turnbull et al., 2022). The literature has demonstrated that FPPs improve student academic and social outcomes (Turnbull et al., 2006), families experience less stress when they have FPPs with their children's educators (Burke & Hodapp, 2014), and school systems that prioritize a culture of collaborative FPPs increase internal support for teachers building FPPs (Haines & Reyes, 2022b).

Following exploratory research that found that organic relationship formation was lacking between refugee families and their children's teachers (Haines et al., 2022; Reyes et al., 2021); Haines and Reyes (2022a) developed a protocol to guide teachers and families through a relationship-building conversation. The conversation tool, called the Relationships Among Families and Teachers (RAFT) Protocol, was developed using Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) techniques. They situated this research in two small cities in the Northeastern U.S. that have become home to more than 8,000 resettled refugees since 1980 (USCRI Vermont, 2022.). During the pilot study using the RAFT Protocol with students, families, and school professionals, Haines and Reyes (2022a) found that all the teacher participants desired to continue implementing the tool and all participants were satisfied with participating in the pilot study.

In this dissertation, I build on the pilot study that developed the RAFT Protocol (Haines & Reyes, 2022a) by guiding stakeholders through a process to develop an assessment tool to understand the outcomes of the administration of the RAFT protocol.

Additionally, this dissertation provides a tool that can assess and thereby sustain the ongoing implementation of the RAFT protocol (Fixsen et al., 2013; Mandinach et al., 2006; Schildkamp et al., 2013).

1.2 Problem Statement

The most explicit mandates for FPPs come from federal education statutes (Turnbull et al., 2022). Federal law describes the need for FPPs for all students and points out that schools pay special attention to developing FPPs with children and families from historically marginalized populations (ESSA, 2015). While there is a strong field of research regarding the positive impact of FPPs and similar topics, such as family “engagement,” “involvement,” and “partnership” (Haines, 2015; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoy, 2012), there are few studies dedicated to students from marginalized communities and a significant gap when it comes to FPP research engaging students from refugee backgrounds (Haines et al., 2018; Haines et al., 2022a).

Blue-Banning et al. (2004) offered six principles of FPPs: communication, commitment, equality, professional competence or skills, trust, and respect. Haines et al. (2018) proposed that, through the implementation and operationalization of these six principles, FPPs may develop where “families and education professionals regard each other as reliable allies, and education professionals provide families with multiple opportunities for meaningful participation in their children’s education” (p. 36). Haines et al.’s (2017) call to action to provoke further research into the operationalization of FPPs, used these six components to develop a multidimensional system of support for

developing FPPs. They noted the prolific research into the many barriers and facilitators to developing trusting FPPs. In response, they combined partnership models from the general and special education literature to create a comprehensive system of support known as the Sunshine Model. They used the earlier components to develop a model that would “conceptualize, implement, and measure trusting relationships” in special and general education FPPs (p. 240). They created the Sunshine Model intending to strengthen FPPs to provide a foundation of relationship and trust that empowers families, students, and educators to communicate to meet one another’s needs explicitly. The Sunshine Model employed a broad range of activities that benefited students, professionals, and families; and allowed the model to be flexible enough to respond to the needs of families, students, and educators across ages and unique familial and educational circumstances encountered throughout a child’s educational experience (Haines et al., 2017). Haines et al. recognized the large body of work already done to document the benefits of FPPs and pointed out the need for additional research on operationalizing approaches, such as the Sunshine Model, to build sustainable FPPs.

They noted with the Sunshine Model that it is critical to consider the student and family's specific needs while providing activities to develop FPPs. Project RAFT was a study that sought to specifically build those relationships (Haines & Reyes, 2022a). Project RAFT was a CBPAR study designed to develop a relationship-building tool, the RAFT Protocol. The study was a partnership with local schools and leaders in the refugee community to strengthen relationships between refugee families and schools. An

advisory council from the local educational community designed and piloted the RAFT Protocol in two school districts with relatively large refugee populations. The advisory council and the research team modified the McGill Action Planning System (Vandercook et al., 1989) or MAPS into a tool suitable for use with refugee families. This relationship-building tool or conversation protocol was designed to be student centered, culturally sustaining, and implemented in less than two hours. The findings from the Project RAFT pilot study (Haines & Reyes, 2022a) were overwhelmingly positive from both schools and families and included seven themes: (a) child-centeredness; (b) pre-trained norms and prompts; (c) appreciation for listening to each participant; (d) need for a clear discussion of participants' roles; (e) benefits of not being connected to parent-teacher conferences; (f) development of relationships that grow through continued collaboration; (g) appreciation of the student by all participants. Additionally, all participants wanted to continue to implement the RAFT Protocol.

The next step set out by the researchers was to develop an assessment tool to measure the effectiveness of the implementation to promote ongoing implementation. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the plans after the initial pilot study. This dissertation study accomplishes this next step by working with stakeholders to develop an assessment tool to provide data on the effect of future RAFT Protocol implementations.

1.3 Purpose of the Research

This dissertation creates a tool that will collect data with the aims to sustain the implementation of the RAFT protocol and thereby improve relationships between refugee

families and schools. To do so, I relied on CBPAR methodologies and an Appreciative Inquiry (AI; Cooperrider, 2017) approach to collaborate with a school district to discover what worked for them, dream about how they envisioned using the RAFT protocol to develop FPPs, and design an assessment tool that would support ongoing implementation. Specifically, I used CBPAR and survey research methods in this study to discover what constructs should be assessed to understand the outcomes of the RAFT Protocol administration and how to measure them.

The experiences and insights from the Participatory Action Research Team (PART) informed a generative process of designing an assessment tool to ensure that the RAFT protocol meets the identified needs in sustainable, efficient, and effective ways. Using this tool, the TARP will also increase the amount of actionable data received by stakeholders to empower schools to continue using the RAFT protocol to develop strong relationships between refugee families and school professionals.

1.4 Research Question

The central research question guiding this study is:

RQ. What constructs should schools assess to understand RAFT outcomes, and how can they measure them?

1.5 Significance

In *Democracy and Education* (1916), John Dewey calls education “the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested” (p. 384). This thought, based on the democratic ideal of education, does not apply only to children

as learners but also highlights the necessity of educators' civic engagement to set a vision and a path for philosophical distinctions, such as the value of partnerships with students' families as critical to informing what a broad liberal education entails and how it is implemented.

FPPs are collaborative, trusting, two-way relationships. To reflect this type of relationship, this research was designed to allow the community (that is, educators and family members) to guide the research agenda and demonstrate that researchers can work in service to the field. Engaging educators as researchers through the use of CBPAR methodologies allowed educators to set the agenda and strategically increase the educational community's knowledge based on the field's needs (Stoecker, 2013). Thus, the reliance on CBPAR and AI was critical to this study. Since educational resources are allocated based on data, this collaboration between researchers and the school districts will help schools sustain the use of the RAFT protocol by producing a tool to collect data to guide future implementation that will directly impact refugee students' educational experience and academic achievement.

1.6 Format of this Dissertation

This is a journal style dissertation containing five chapters. Chapter two contains a comprehensive literature review. Chapter three outlines the methods I used for this study. Chapter four is an article manuscript that I will submit for publication which contains the findings of the dissertation study. Chapter five covers the implications and

significance of this research. Following the five chapters of this dissertation are a comprehensive reference list and appendices.

CHAPTER 2: COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This section will provide an overview of the literature situating this dissertation. First, I will discuss the current context of refugee resettlement in the United States. Second, I will present an in-depth review of the research related to FPPs and refugee students. Third, I will discuss Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model as it relates to FPPs. Fourth, I will present Appreciative Inquiry and Community-Based Participatory Action research as the methodological underpinnings of this study. Finally, I will describe the conceptual framework of this study and how the different theories came together to inform the design of this study.

2.2 Refugees and Refugee Communities

Refugee resettlement communities are made up of people from diverse backgrounds fleeing persecution who have resettled in host communities around the world. Although the term “refugee” is used to codify a single type of experience, the term covers a diverse population in both experience and culture (Matthews, 2008; Reed et al., 2012). Refugee status under international law is described by the United Nations Refugee Status Determination process (UNHCR, 2020b). The resettlement process can be very lengthy and complex, and when refugees have resettled in a new community, the demographics and culture of the host community change (Bose, 2020). Resettled refugees do not have a choice in their final resettlement community, nor do they select their initial housing (Mott, 2010). At times host communities may be hostile to changes caused by or

thought to be caused by the influx of new cultures (Bose, 2020). In addition, there may be significant barriers to integration within the resettlement community based on language, cultural practices, socioeconomic status, and housing (Ager & Strang, 2008). In this section, I will address the definition and demographics of refugees in the United States and Vermont and then discuss the resettlement process. I will then discuss the integration of the refugee community within the host community and the integration of refugee students within the school systems.

2.2.1 Definition and Demographics of Refugee Populations

The word “refugee” has become a popular and vague term to describe anyone who has been displaced. Yet, international law provides refugee protections for a narrower definition of displaced peoples (Dauvergne, 2008). According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is any person who:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, 2010, p. 3)

The population of resettled refugees is growing worldwide, with the most significant portion within the United States (UNHCR, 2022c). The US has a long history of refugee resettlement. After the conclusion of World War II, Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 to regulate the massive influx of refugees coming from

Europe (US Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2021). From 1975 through the beginning of 2022, the US resettled over 3.4 million refugees, with annual admissions ranging from 27,110 to 207,000 (Refugee Processing Center, 2022; UNHCR, 2021). Although 27 nations offer resettlement services, the US resettles more refugees than all other nations combined, with a total quota of 125,000 possible resettlements in 2022 (Refugee Processing Center, 2022).

Refugee resettlement has changed the cultural landscape of Northwestern Vermont, notable as Vermont has regularly been ranked as the “whitest state” in the US (US Census Bureau, 2022). Over the last 44 years, Vermont has received over 8,000 new refugees (USCRI Vermont, 2022). The school district involved in this study began receiving students through the refugee resettlement program in 1980, and now over 30% of enrolled students are receiving services or being monitored by the Multilingual (ML) Learners program (Gonzalez, 2018). This demographic shift is typical throughout the US: smaller resettlement cities and specific neighborhoods are becoming dramatically more culturally diverse as new refugees arrive (Bose, 2020).

2.2.2 The Resettlement Process

It is essential to understand the resettlement process to understand the need for FPPs for students resettled into communities across the United States. That is, how a person gains refugee status and is permanently resettled. This understanding will help the reader understand how the resettlement experience and cross-cultural interactions experienced by refugee parents and their children impact their relationships with schools

and the need for extra effort to help engage students and their families in the new school setting.

The refugee resettlement process begins whenever individuals are displaced by a natural disaster or human conflict that puts their life and well-being at risk. In 2020 only slightly more than two percent of those determined to require resettlement were resettled to a permanent new home (Solf & Rehberg, 2021). Under the definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention, to receive UN refugee designation, one must have experienced a scenario that fits into that definition and then provide proof of both identity and experience of persecution (Betts et al., 2008). Refugee status is based on external circumstances that force individuals to flee, also known as forced migration. Most individuals who qualify for refugee status have first been internally displaced within their country and then been displaced to a second country and have lived for a time in a refugee camp (UNHCR, 2020c). Then, after the required UNHCR paperwork for resettlement has been completed and accepted, along with an approved assessment by the resettlement nation, may the persons be permanently resettled in a third resettlement country (UNHCR, 2022a).

Once refugee status is granted, and the country of resettlement is determined to be the US, and accepted by the US government, a local non-profit resettlement agency is responsible for determining the placement location and takes on the role of facilitating services for the first year of resettlement (Mott, 2010; Refugee Act, 1980; Wright, 1981). Location determination occurs with little input from the individual or family unless they

have relatives in a resettlement country (Mott, 2010). Because the resettlement process directs refugees to specific inviting municipalities, those communities may receive relatively significant numbers of newcomers into their communities (Bose, 2020). Within these communities, and due to housing, employment opportunities, and cultural differences, these newcomers face the two-way process of integrating socially and economically into their host communities (Ager & Strang, 2004; Bose, 2020). As school-age children with refugee backgrounds enroll in local schools, they and their families face these barriers to full access and inclusion.

2.3 FPPs

When the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was first adopted, initially titled The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, it provided parents the right to partner with school professionals to make decisions about their children's education (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1975). This idea of school-family partnership continued with the authoring of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015). ESSA states that “Each local educational agency (...) shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy” [Sec.1116(a)(2)]. In addition, “an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement policy” shall be conducted with “meaningful involvement of parents and family members” [Sec.1116(a)(2)(D)]. The law includes specific provisions for “identifying barriers to greater participation by parents (...) (with particular attention to

parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background)” [Sec.1116(a)(2)(D)(i)].

While the educational policy in the United States articulates the rights of families to be involved in the educational planning for their children, the operationalization of this policy is highly variable, and too often, schools do not adequately plan or prepare to implement this policy effectively (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Haines et al., 2021; Mandarakas, 2014; Turnbull et al., 2009). Studies have shown that teachers have minimal pre-service training in developing relationships with families (Kyzar et al., 2019; Lasater, 2016). Due to this lack of training and preparation, teachers often lack the confidence to partner with families (Francis et al., 2021). There is also a historical lack of clarity around what an FPP can or should look like (Dunst, 2000). This lack of understanding leads to misunderstanding of family and school professionals' expectations. Ambiguity around the expectations of FPPs impacts families' motivation to invest time and energy in partnering, and the hierarchal power dynamics of family-school relationships create additional barriers to partnership (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017).

While FPPs can be essential in fostering student success, they can also facilitate equitable access to cultural expectations between educators and families. There are significant equity concerns around access to educational opportunities for ML students and students coming from historically marginalized populations (Gorski, 2016). Additionally, misunderstandings during personal interactions with families can occur due

to differences in culture, language, educational experiences, and behavioral and parental expectations (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016; Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012). FPPs may also impact parent-teacher power dynamics as school staff and families share their perspectives and expectations while building working relationships (Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012). Moreover, without explicit effort to build respectful working relationships, implicit bias can build up over time as differences in backgrounds impact interactions between educators and families (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016).

Georgis et al.'s (2014) ethnographic case study of Somali refugee parent engagement included 33 interviews with school and community stakeholders, a focus group of 13 parents, and collecting meaningful artifacts from the studied intervention. This study found that the definitions of parent engagement at the time were not available to all parents and did not value the various ways that parents provide value to their children's education. Additionally, culture brokers, deployed from resettlement community organizations or employed by schools, played a significant role in developing trust and relationships with refugee families. This study informs practice by illustrating the need to engage families based not only on school needs but also on the needs of parents. By engaging parents in the design of family partnerships, schools will be better equipped to meet the needs of students and families and accomplish their objectives.

2.3.1 Refugee Families Want More Opportunities

The literature suggests that refugee families seek to be more involved in their children's education and be more engaged with the schools. Koyama and Bakuza's

(2017) twenty-six-month ethnographic study of refugee students in the Northeast explored how refugee families and community schools interacted. They conducted 230 semi-structured interviews with refugees, resettlement agencies and support staff, school staff and faculty, business owners, and residents. They showed in their study that refugee parents were heavily engaged in their children's educational success. They advocated for their families and partnered with school and community members to understand the local educational system and culture. Critically, this study showed that framing parents as experts and valuable resources in school systems, allowed space for them to be central in the decision-making culture of the school. This improved the educational outcomes for students and allowed parents to contribute significantly to their communities. Additionally, these partnerships helped create safe spaces and policies for their dynamic school demographics.

Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2009) interviewed three Sudanese refugee parents and three ESL teachers to examine (a) the literacy practices of Sudanese families; (b) the ESL teachers' perspectives of refugee students' needs and challenges; and (c) how teachers may be able to become more effective at meeting those needs. They found that the parents believed that the teachers felt that low-income minority parents were disinterested in their children's academic experience. Yet, all the Sudanese parents wanted to support teachers and develop stronger partnerships with the school. The implications of this study suggest that teachers must become more educated on the background of their students' experiences and provide more culturally competent

classroom experiences for them; this can be accomplished by inviting diverse voices from the community and their students' families to inform their classrooms. They showed that better communication between teachers and families dramatically impacted building strong, trusting partnerships.

Cun (2020) interviewed five Burmese refugee parents who resettled in the northeast United States to understand what challenges their families faced regarding their children's educational experiences in US schools and what support they expected for their children and themselves from those schools. She found significant concerns about language barriers and how to be involved in their children's learning. Parents struggled to understand teachers and materials sent home but also expected to have opportunities to be involved in school activities. This study challenged a deficit view of refugee families and showed that they valued education and wanted to be involved with their children's educational experiences yet lacked access to language support.

Finally, Weine (2008) examined several multi-family group interventions to provide access to mental health support for refugees and their families experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He suggested that engaging families in any educational intervention for refugee youth is critical, as families are the central social context for resettled refugee students and provide valuable resources to help youth traverse the various traumas of the resettlement experience. He suggested that it is imperative for any intervention with refugee families to spend adequate time engaging families to allow the

intervention to have the full support of the family members and that doing so would create a more welcoming culture for refugee students and families.

2.3.2 A Welcoming Culture Improves FPPs

Turney and Kao (2009) studied the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K) data set to examine the variability of barriers to parental involvement in schools across race and immigration status. Their analysis found that those who struggled with their English language ability and had spent less time in the US had the most substantial barriers to parental participation in their children's education. They also found that the barriers had varying impacts across races, showing that minority status continued to play a role in parental involvement over time. They suggest that children's educational experience may be profoundly impacted if schools proactively welcome minority immigrant parents into their community, provide supports, and reduce the barriers to involvement for immigrant parents.

Likewise, Cureton's (2020) qualitative research of Muslim refugee parents found that safe and welcoming school environments, which included positive communication between schools and families and empathy toward families' needs, promoted the development of FPPs. She also found that a welcoming culture in the school enabled parents to engage more readily. Having a welcoming environment also included having school staff that were of like ethnic or racial identity. In contrast to a welcoming atmosphere, Cureton found that bullying and discrimination caused a sense of fear that kept parents disengaged for fear that their lack of English ability would hinder their

ability to help their child. This study is critical because it adds to the limited literature on creating more welcoming school environments for refugee students by hiring diverse staff and family-school liaisons to directly engage new families, as well developing anti-bullying campaigns to create safe spaces.

DeCapua and Marshall (2015) stated that for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), such as many students coming from a refugee background, strong connections between the teachers, students, and families are essential to creating a fertile environment for successful learning. This paper directly supports the need for welcoming school cultures to facilitate FPPs with SLIFE students.

As noted earlier, Weine (2008) suggested that families should serve as integral support for students' education and through engaging with schools to help develop culturally relevant curricula. McBrien's (2005) review of the literature on refugee education pointed out that refugee children and families need to be welcomed and provided with adequate support. When schools include families as critical school community members, they may be bridge builders between the schools and refugee communities.

Hailu et al.'s (2021) conceptual paper discussing ideas for education researchers who wish to research and work with post-secondary African refugee students posits that universities can create safe spaces by engaging African refugee students' cultural heritage to inform a common school culture and reduce othering. They suggested that African refugee youth may face marginalization due to historical and systemic racism against

Black Americans. Yet, post-secondary education may act as a conduit for social capital and economic growth for African refugee youth. Rather than inciting marginalization, refugees' cultural heritage and community may serve as a support to counteract othering.

2.3.3 Organizational Vision Creates Clarity and Collaboration

Another salient theme in the literature on FPPs is the importance of organizational vision and mission. Ladson-Billings (2006) reframed the idea that our country has an achievement gap, and suggested that we consider the historical implications of years of grossly inequitable investments in education based on racial and ethnic differences. She asserted that we do not have an achievement gap that can be easily explained by individual data points such as family culture or dropout rates, but there is a cumulative debt that has occurred year-over-year as educational disparities have accumulated, creating an opportunity gap across races. In her article Ladson-Billings focused on the disparities in educational investment along racial lines; one could also include linguistic backgrounds as another area to consider when noticing this cumulative debt. As schools and districts that have higher rates of EL students receive reduced resources as compared to predominantly English speaking schools (Manspile et al., 2021). In light of this cumulative debt perspective, it is essential to focus on more communal themes versus individual experiences and, as a result, also to examine organization-wide cultures. Along these lines, research on FPPs has sought to focus on the organizational level and its context, that is the school and the community, rather than

just individual students. Also, research on FPPs has sought to focus on strength-based models instead of deficit-based models when developing educational interventions.

Recently, Haines and Reyes (2022b) completed 42 semi-structured interviews with teachers in three school districts in the northeastern United States to understand the teacher perspective on what helps to facilitate or to hinder the development of cooperative interpersonal relationships between teachers and families from the refugee community. Although they found that there was variability across the participants, none of the participants felt that their relationships with their refugee students' families were satisfactory.

Haines and Reyes (2022b) also found that school systems with an organization-wide focus on building FPPs had a culture of support that facilitated student-centered cross-organizational partnerships. In contrast, teachers working in districts that lacked a system-wide focus on building relationships with refugee families faced more confusion and ambiguity around their responsibilities and ability to collaborate with colleagues. Considering a systems approach to FPPs is vital because it shows that the institution's focus directly impacts the experience of teachers and students. Also, districts can use their intrinsic strengths to seek improved support for their faculty, thereby improving the outcomes for their students and the community.

Hill and Torres (2010) pointed out that schools must examine their cultural bias and unspoken expectations to build strong FPPs in the Latino community. They found that schools must engage families' cultural heritage and educational expectations to

understand the discrepancies between school culture and family culture. To do this, schools need to improve their willingness to provide information, communicate, and build bridges with families beyond just parents.

As mentioned earlier, Koyama and Bakuza (2017) found in their ethnographic study of stakeholders in a refugee community, that when schools embark on developing an organizational vision for strong FPPs; parents were deeply engaged in their children's educational success. When schools supported parents in this manner, parents became a part of the decision-making community.

Schools need to have a broad range of input to create cultures that welcome diverse backgrounds. Smith (2005) examined the variables that impact the academic achievement of traditionally marginalized children. She pointed out that schools need to address the implicit bias of teachers, administrators, and school culture, as well as the white privilege and cultural entitlement of the school community. Schools must engender culturally proficient leadership to help develop a vision for meeting all children's needs. Schools must engage a diverse population of stakeholders to inform the development of culturally proficient leadership and understand cultural blind spots. Smith (2005) concluded that without diverse input, blind spots remain.

If we think of refugee communities as homogenous and focus on the refugee versus majority culture identity, we veil the personal complexity of refugee students and their families. Dávila (2021) found that students' understanding of their national and civic identity was more complex than a single refugee narrative. Therefore, any school's

focus on FPPs needs to have programming and curricula that focus on the multiple identities of any student and their families, not just on their refugee status.

The research consistently supports the value of developing an organization-wide vision of the importance of FPPs. Such organization-wide focus communicates roles and possibilities explicitly and consistently and thereby facilitates the development of FPPs. When this happens, it empowers school staff to partner with refugee family members and empowers family members to engage as experts in the decision making-community.

2.3.4 Reframing Language and Communication as Barriers to Partnership

In this literature review on FPPs, I have identified several themes: refugee families want more opportunities to be involved with their children's education; schools that provide deliberately welcoming cultures and invest in understanding and embracing the refugee cultures are supportive of FPPs, and organizations that have a clear systemic vision for building FPPs provide the most direction and clarity for teachers. Yet, one more theme appears throughout the literature, language and communication are noted as barriers to building FPPs with refugee families. There is a field of scholarship that recognizes this barrier, not out of a deficit view of the families' linguistic background, but rather a deficit of available resources. In Morales et al.'s (2012) multiple case study with six Mexican-immigrant families in the Midwestern United states, they noted that living in an area without readily available language supports, families felt silenced and required their children to act as translators or language brokers which at times lead to parental humiliation and parent-child conflict.

Other studies describe culturally responsive approaches teachers can use to communicate directly with parents and studies that describe school systems that enhance communication through providing access to interpreters or multicultural brokers. Tadesse (2014) notes that barriers to African refugee parent-teacher relationships are not the same as those of majority culture parents. She concluded that supporting families through a commitment to providing school-initiated support and services leads to effective partnerships. These supports included hiring cultural brokers of similar backgrounds to guide their families. To combat this idea that language background is a barrier to communication and, therefore, partnership, schools must bear the responsibility of providing access to language support and removing obstacles that limit familial access to collaboration in their children's education (Lim & Cheatham, 2021).

Haines et al. (2015a) completed a 4-month case study investigating how a family and Head Start instructors nurtured the self-regulation of a 4-year-old boy. The study used three continua of adult behavior--protection, affective response, and intervention—to discuss the adults' response to the participant's changing self-regulation and engagement skills. This study found significantly different expectations for behavior between home and school (Head Start), yet no specific plan was established for two-way communication to help develop a partnership between the family and the school. In a separate publication based on the same study, this time focusing on FPPs, Haines (2015b) pointed out that communication was primarily from the school to the family. Even though the parents had limited literacy, this communication came in a written format, once again

showing how access to literacy support became a barrier to the effective partnership between the schools and the refugee parents.

More recently, Haines et al. (2022b) conducted an embedded case study with a team of researchers who completed 55 interviews with students, parents, teachers, liaisons, and school administrators. The data showed that the existing relationships were not, by definition, “trusting collaborative partnerships.” Barriers to these partnerships included assumptions about families by teachers and vice versa, barriers to communication, and divergent understandings of students’ academic development. Each of these barriers can be linked to poor communication. This study highlighted various forms of inequity through the use of the Equity Literacy Framework, directly impacting refugee families, and provided a critical understanding of the importance of FPPs to help inform school policy and future research on the impact of relationships between school professionals and families. They found that a lack of communication was the main barrier to developing FPPs.

Jones and Trickett's (2005) quantitative study of 226 Russian immigrant and refugee students and their mothers found that most of the children played the role of culture broker for their parents. This role was found to relate to stress levels and isolation from school and friends and was more frequent when there was less time and less American acculturation for the mothers. Once again, this study points to the need to provide access to language and communication supports. With a smaller sample, Perry's (2009) ethnography examined literacy brokering among young children of Sudanese

refugees. Perry collected Ethnographic data through observations of the families, both in their homes and outside their homes, interviews with parents, and artifact collection from the schools and community. They found that literacy brokering may occur to a certain extent in day-to-day life because the language skills taught in community-based adult ESL classes were not in real-world relevant contexts, such as education or healthcare. Therefore, the adults could not fully understand the contextual meaning of different text genres. In the absence of supports, the children filled in the gap and came to learn about the language used in variable contexts, and both adults and children gained valuable real-world learning in the midst.

Sohn and Wang (2006) interviewed six Korean mothers who immigrated to Atlanta, GA, and had children between pre-k and 4th grade in public school. They found that even when teachers felt their relationships with these English-speaking Korean mothers were strong, the participants felt that language, culture, and discrimination were still barriers amid a perceived lack of teacher support. While language support did not appear to be a critical need, they still perceived it as a barrier to the participants. The implications were that teachers need to provide more dedicated language support, cultural sensitivity, and opportunities for parent involvement than they may expect to develop strong FPPs with immigrant families.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

In this section, I discuss the intersection of theory and methodology that inform and provide structure for the conceptual framework of this study. At the highest level, I

relied on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model because it focuses on the interactions of the various systems that influence human development. I used CBPAR as my methodological perspective because it best mirrored the findings associated with successful FPPs. It is a collaborative methodology that treats the participants like partners in the research rather than setting up the researcher as primarily driving the research focus and perspective. Finally, I relied on an AI lens to acknowledge the participants' expertise in interpreting the data, identifying the findings, and dreaming up a tool that would be useful to them in supporting ongoing implementation. Specifically, I relied on AI to specify how we should assess the results of the RAFT Protocol administration from the unique perspectives of pilot participants to design an assessment tool that would provide data on the effect of using the RAFT Protocol to provide a rationale for ongoing implementation and inform classroom and district practice and policy.

2.4.1 Ecological Model of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualized child development through the lens of systems of relationships in his work on the Ecological System of Human Development. He described these complex systems of relationships as nested circles surrounding the child, where the closest systems had the most significant impact on the child's development. The innermost ring, the microsystem:

is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in

sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. Examples include such settings as family, school, peer group, and workplace. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 5)

The mesosystem encompasses the interactions and relationships between different microsystems that a person engages in regularly (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). More specifically, the mesosystem represents how people interact to influence the individual. For this research, the focus is on how FPPs exist in the mesosystem as an interaction between the school and family, influencing the individual student. The Ecological Model of Human Development provides a framework for understanding how FPPs impact the development of students through the interaction of different systems of a student's life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated, "A child's ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he is taught than on the existence and nature of ties between the school and home" (p. 3). This framework focuses on how the student functions within the school, their family, how the school and the family interact, and how this interaction can support the student's development.

Relying on the Ecological Model of Human Development as a framework allowed me to use this current research to view the interactions between families and schools not only as a positive interaction for relationships but to understand that those relationships are significant and necessary to the personal development of students. I focused this study on the often overlooked mesosystem, because the mesosystem, as an essential element in students' development, can be influenced to impact student

development through the students' existing support structures (Sheridan & Garbacz, 2022).

2.4.2 Community-Based Participatory Action Research

Using a theoretical perspective that empowers interaction between the family and school participants lends itself to relying on a methodological perspective that likewise empowers the participants. For this reason, CBPAR is the most appropriate approach for this study. Fine (2008) defines CBPAR as an approach to research devoted to social justice that is seated in the context of community cooperation and committed to making change.

The term CBPAR covers a variety of research approaches that individually focus more or less on each of the words in the title (i.e., Community-Based, Participatory, or Action). Yet, amid this broad field of research, common elements emerge across the methods:

1. the research is community-based, or rather engages the community, and it promotes collaboration between stakeholders and the researchers, at times blurring the lines between roles so that all participants are responsible for the research agenda as co-researchers,
2. the researchers intend to make change or to be actionable in the field, and
3. the research uses inclusive methods that allow understanding by a broad audience (Israel et al., 1998; Kindon, 2010; Stoecker, 2013).

CBPAR breaks down the power dynamics between researcher and participant and is grounded in the belief that community members provide expertise and add credibility to the findings (Kendon, 2010). Researchers using CBPAR seek out and value the expertise of the community and the participants. More input from the community results in a more understandable and applicable study that significantly impacts practice based on the research findings.

2.4.3 Appreciative Inquiry

AI provided a lens whereby the strengths of a situation can be identified and capitalized upon to enact positive change, rather than conducting research from a deficit perspective. AI, as envisioned by Cooperrider (2017), is a philosophical approach to action research that rests on four fundamental principles:

- 1) grounded observation to identify the best of what is,
- 2) vision and logic to identify ideals of what might be,
- 3) collaborative dialogue and choice to achieve consent about what should be and,
- 4) collective experimentation to discover what can be (Bushe, 2011, p. 87).

This approach to action research added to the methods of CBPAR by giving the stakeholders the responsibility to envision a better world through their experiences and definitions of what is best without critiquing previous work or damaging relationships with their peers. This generative approach to what-can-be or rather "creative theorizing" focused on the strengths of each involved and situated progress as beneficial to all parties

(Cooperrider, 2017, p. 95). As such, this approach aligns with the values of FPPs in that they both aim to identify the strengths in a given situation and capitalize on and utilize them to bring about positive outcomes for all parties involved.

2.4.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study can be found in appendix 7.1. From left to right, the three large disks in the framework represent; the mesosystem of the Ecological Model of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the administration of the RAFT Protocol (Haines & Reyes, 2022a), and the Tool for the Assessment of the RAFT Protocol (TARP). The framework describes the theoretical and methodological process of developing the TARP and how its administration will impact relationships within FPPs and the ongoing administration of the RAFT Protocol. The reader can understand the framework through the following steps:

1. The blue disk depicts a mesosystem of a student (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and the orange disks represent the student's family and school, which are two microsystems of the student. The interactions of these microsystems are where the relationships critical to developing FPPs are developed and cultivated.
2. Arrow #1 indicates that we used CBPAR techniques to develop the RAFT Protocol through the input of schools and families (Haines & Reyes, 2022a).
3. The yellow disk depicts the administration of the RAFT Protocol. The two-way arrows connecting the participants (student, school, and family) represent how the participants interact to build relationships during the process.

4. Arrow #2 indicates that we used AI and CBPAR methodologies to develop the TARP based on the foundation of the RAFT Protocol and the community's needs.
5. The green disk represents the TARP. The participants' arrows indicate that all RAFT protocol participants participate in the TARP.
6. Arrow #3 represents how the TARP will inform future RAFT protocol implementations.
7. Arrow #4 represents how the TARP will inform the relationships within a student's mesosystem and therefore impact the FPPs of the participants.

The research question of this study is seated within arrow #2 of this framework and impacts the TARP's development by probing the school's motivation to continue implementing the RAFT Protocol. That motivation informed what questions we included in the TARP, how it will be implemented, and what validated tools will be included in the field study to assess the specific constructs necessary to understand RAFT outcomes identified by the stakeholders. The research question for this study is: What constructs should schools assess to understand RAFT outcomes, and how can they measure them?

Within this conceptual framework, I used CBPAR methodologies to value the inputs of the school personnel, the family members, and their interactions to develop the TARP. These same methodologies were also used to develop the RAFT Protocol. AI and CBPAR were used to create the TARP through a survey development process with the input of stakeholders. I chose an AI approach in conjunction with CBPAR to build upon the work of the RAFT Protocol and receive guidance through the participants' input. The

arrows on the bottom of the framework indicate how the TARP will impact the future implementation of the RAFT Protocol and impact relationships critical to developing FPPs. The data produced by the TARP will provide a window into the impacts of the RAFT Protocol administration and ways that the Protocol or its implementation may require additional modification. This data will be valuable in providing a clear understanding of the value of RAFT administration and will be helpful in the determination of resource allocation for ongoing implementation.

In the next chapter, I will describe the methods of this study using these theoretical and methodological approaches to understand what constructs should be measured to understand RAFT outcomes. Through this dissertation, I explain how, together with these participants, we developed a tool to provide schools with an assessment of the outcomes of using the RAFT protocol.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Overview

The goals for this research were to provide a process and product (TARP) for school and family use that efficiently utilizes school and community resources to provide a clear understanding of the outcomes of implementing the RAFT Protocol. With this understanding, schools and families with a refugee background will be able to more quickly and efficiently understand how using the RAFT protocol has impacted their relationships and communities and adjust classroom and district practice and policy accordingly. Additionally, the TARP will provide data on the efficacy and value of implementing the RAFT Protocol to help inform future implementation. I chose the methods of this study to support these research goals.

I used CBPAR and survey research methods to collect and analyze data that informed the development of a survey instrument to assess the effect of future RAFT Protocol implementations. In this section, I will explain why this particular approach is appropriate and essential for this study. Furthermore, I will present the steps for data collection and analysis to ensure data credibility, such as relying on interrater reliability and member checking throughout the analysis process.

For this study, the data collection included a series of focus groups used to define the constructs within the design of the TARP. During the focus groups, I collected the perspectives of a broad range of educational community members on the benefits of administering the RAFT Protocol and what value it provided to schools and families.

3.2 Survey Design Methodology

The TARP is a survey instrument designed to measure three constructs of RAFT implementation. We completed a specific order of tasks to develop this instrument, requiring two different data collection methodologies. The design process contained two essential elements, “deciding what to measure and designing and testing questions that will be good measures” (Fowler, 2014, p.99).

First, I facilitated two focus groups with the PART to determine the constructs of most concern, or rather what to measure, along with the most appropriate format for the instrument (Fowler, 2014). Focus groups are used to understand peoples’ opinions about different ideas, items, projects, or initiatives and are composed of participants with close connections, relationships, or experiences with the topic of discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups are organized discussions facilitated through a series of questions, called a questioning route, designed to collect the opinions of a broad spectrum of stakeholders in a collaborative, relaxed, conversational environment (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Second, based on the analysis of the focus group data, as organized in an analytic report, I drafted a set of preliminary survey items for critical review and cognitive interviews (Fowler, 2014). A critical review involves critiquing the questions based on existing lists of question standards and testing them with friends and colleagues (Fowler, 2014; Lessler & Forsyth, 1996). Through this process, I began refining the questions prior to systematically analyzing the items with stakeholders through cognitive

interviews. Cognitive interviewing is a “technique to study the manner in which targeted audiences understand, mentally process, and respond to the materials we present – with a special emphasis on potential breakdowns in this process” (Willis, 2005, p. 3). Just as focus group participants were chosen for their unique perspectives on the topic to provide expert opinions on the constructs and questions used in the final survey, cognitive interview participants offered unique views of the target population for critiquing and analyzing the preliminary questions. Through cognitive interviews, I aimed to discover participants’ problems with survey questions before field testing with a larger sample size (Willis, 2015). Cognitive interviews consisted of semi-structured think-aloud interviews (Fowler, 2014; Willis, 2005) that were augmented for deeper understanding with verbal probing (Willis, 2005, 2015) to understand the cognitive process through which participants understood the questions. Through this understanding, I refined and removed survey questions from the protocol. Finally, I ordered the survey questions to be most accessible and understood to the participant population and presented them to the PART during the final focus group. During this focus group, we finalized the items and format of the TARP for future field testing (Fowler, 2014).

3.3 Research Design

I used a CBPAR design to develop the TARP in cooperation with the PART. Based on the conceptual framework, I gathered input from the PART that informed the development of the TARP. The data produced by the TARP aims to inform classroom and district policy and practice, provide a clear understanding of the value of RAFT

administration, and therefore be helpful in resource allocation for ongoing implementation.

3.4 Setting and Participants

I conducted this study in a small city in the Northeastern U.S. that has become home to more than 8,000 resettled refugees since 1980 (USCRI Vermont, 2022). This city's school district participated in the original pilot study of Project RAFT and has a diverse student body primarily made up of resettled refugee families.

For this study, the PART included two school administrators, two EL teachers, a Home-School Liaison, and a parent. We recruited these participants from the RAFT pilot study participants. The stakeholder group taking part in the cognitive interviews included two families, three Home-School Liaisons, an EL teacher, a classroom teacher, and a district administrator. The stakeholder group had families with a refugee background who participated in the RAFT Project pilot study. The participant groups, along with their group objectives, are summarized in appendix 7.2. In the next section, I will describe the data collection methods used in this study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The phases of this study included three in-person 1.5-hour focus groups and eight in-person interviews with pilot study participants. In the first focus group, we discussed what type of data would be valuable for the group to know as a result of the RAFT implementation and defined three constructs to be measured by the TARP. The questioning route (Krueger & Casey, 2015) for the first focus group can be found in

appendix 7.3. During the second focus group, I presented, for discussion and feedback, preliminary survey items based on the constructs that emerged from the first focus group and three validated measures that fit the identified constructs.

Additionally, the second focus group determined the platform and structure of the TARP. The questioning route for the second focus group can be found in appendix 7.4. The group decided that the most appropriate implementation method for the TARP was as a pre-and post-assessment of future RAFT Protocol implementations to give direct feedback to education professionals. The tool contained 15 items measuring three constructs.

After the PART crafted the preliminary TARP questions, I recruited, with the help of the district administrators, participants from each of the stakeholder categories to take part in cognitive interviews to determine:

1. Were the questions consistently understood?
2. Did respondents have the information needed to answer the questions?
3. Did the answers accurately describe what the respondents had to say?
4. Did the answers provide valid measures of what the question was designed to measure? (Fowler, 2014, p. 103)

The cognitive interview protocol can be found in appendix 7.5.

After analysis of the cognitive interview data, I made changes to the TARP questions and format for presentation to the PART during the final focus group to confirm appropriate changes. We discussed the current state of the TARP; discussed

suggested changes; built group consensus around the tool format, design, layout, and implementation, and finalized the TARP for a future field test. The questioning route for the final focus group can be found in appendix 7.6.

3.6 Data Analysis

Participatory data analysis is an ongoing, iterative, and subjectively fraught process (Kindon, 2010; Miles et al., 2013). When engaging different groups of stakeholder participants, the process is bound to encounter different values, goals, and opinions, which may lead to conflicting views. CBPAR positions participants as co-researchers rather than research subjects (Kindon, 2010; Stoecker, 2013), which allows participants to have the power to determine the direction of the research. Throughout this study, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently as the participants' conversations impacted the path of the data collection within the focus groups and cognitive interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In an attempt to focus on CBPAR methodologies, I aimed to act as an organizer rather than an interpreter (Stoecker, 2013), with the hope that my subjectivity was not the only lens through which we viewed the data. For example, as the organizer, I was sometimes tasked with moderating consensus-building within the groups. In this role, I acknowledge that within the population of stakeholders involved in this study, including myself, there is a complex power dynamic that existed between participants that belonged to historically marginalized groups (refugees/non-English speaking and foreign-born) and those that had the power to control the implementation of the tools designed by this study. My role included balancing that

power dynamic to ensure that all voices had a say in the outcomes of this study.

Throughout this study, stakeholders were given the task of data production and analysis, and therefore knowledge producers, of the collected data, and I was there to organize an iterative path to their community understanding. At the same time, I was cognizant of the real-world constraints of the stakeholders that enabled them to participate in this study.

As an example of real-world constraints, one of the participants was absent from the first focus group due to an international family emergency and another administrator who had been key in the inception of this study was on family leave throughout the data collection period. CBPAR data analysis ranges from full participation by all participants in all iterations of analysis to more researcher-focused analysis with participant verification (Kindon, 2010). The analysis within this study spanned a diversity of these analysis strategies.

The data analysis consisted of organizing and coding data collected from the focus groups using a Key Concepts analytic framework, which allowed the PART and me to identify the core ideas of how participants viewed the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). After each focus group, I transcribed the meeting recording and reviewed it for completeness and clarity. I then coded the transcriptions and organized the codes into themes using NVivo. I organized these themes into analysis reports for each question of the questioning route (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I used the analytic reports to draft preliminary TARP questions and select validated measures for presentation at the following focus group. The second focus group data underwent the same analysis

strategy and provided a round of member checking prior to the cognitive interviews to collect their feedback on the preliminary questions and the proposed measures. Three examples of validated measures that met the needs of the stakeholders included: the Student Trust in Faculty Survey (Adams & Forsyth, 2009), the Parent Trust in School Scale (Hoy & Miskel, 2004), and the Family Professional Partnership Scale (Summers et al., 2005).

Additionally, the second focus group developed the format and length of the draft TARP used in the cognitive interviews. The stakeholders determined that the TARP would be most accessible as an online tool. I built the online form using Google Forms as the preferred survey tool of the school district.

Similarly, I transcribed, coded, and organized the data from the cognitive interviews. After coding, I compiled a Project Text Summary, or an organized report of all themes across the different interviews (Willis, 2015). Following the Project Text Summary development, I used the summary to edit the draft TARP questions and tool format. After analyzing the cognitive interviews, I presented an edited TARP during the third focus group for final revisions and editing.

3.7 Researcher Positionality

As Stoecker (2013) suggests, my role in this process is as an organizer rather than an activist. An organizer asks stakeholders about current issues and then organizes them around the identified topics. Yet, I struggled with the balance of power in the design of this process. I am dependent upon my research partners for their expertise, yet I have

provided thoughts when asked about design and implementation issues. I have attempted to balance the power dynamics by starting with questions and letting the participants guide the topics of the study.

My social background and lived experience manifest themselves in many ways that guide my research and create a bias that must be made explicit. I grew up on a small dairy farm in rural New England. What my town lacked in cultural and ethnic diversity, everyone was white and English speaking, it made up for in economic diversity, with many living at or below the poverty line while many others lived a middle to upper-middle-class lifestyle.

After college, I found myself in the exact opposite world that I grew up in, traveling internationally full-time and working on film translations that helped minority people groups retain their culture and language. I then moved to a multinational neighborhood in Vermont and developed a US citizenship course to serve the local refugee population made up of my neighbors. Through my experiences and relationships, I can see how this population is under-served by the majority culture yet offers a valuable and diverse ethic and perspective on life in urban Vermont.

As an educator, I have worked in many areas of education, from teacher preparation at the university level, as a classroom science teacher, to the state Agency of Education. This experience has put me at ease working with students, families, and educators. As a father within a multiethnic family in a majority-white community, I am humbled by what I don't know. I am continually motivated to learn from the experience

of others and have a clearer lens for racism, micro-aggressions, and bias than I had in the past. I am a learner of my subjectivity and bias and am concerned with the impact that it may have on the study design and the implications of this study. Throughout the following two sections, I will describe how I have pragmatically designed this study to mitigate the impacts of this subjectivity.

3.8 Ethics

For this study, I have committed to conducting research housed within the principles of Community-Based Participatory Action Research. A critical belief of this methodology is to co-labor with the community to benefit all individuals involved. The ethical principles that most IRB review for academic research is based on are the Belmont Report's principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Mary Brydon-Miller's (2009) work promotes additional principals of ethics drawn from her work on Covenantal Ethics. Therefore, I followed these ethical guidelines while designing this study:

- **Autonomy/Sovereignty/Voluntary participation:** To ensure that participation in this study was voluntary, I worked with the participants to design the nature of the study. Therefore, in the participants' best interests, I expressed a desire to understand their needs and offered to work with them to promote their work. I also explained the benefit I am receiving as an educator and researcher from their

partnership. Additionally, all participants were assured and had total freedom to withdraw their participation throughout the study.

- **Caring/Respect:** In light of the co-ownership of this work seated in the participants' day-to-day lives, I continued to express the expectation that this work would examine the previous behavior and work of the participants. This examination could produce uncomfortable situations as it required us to discuss topics that might have yielded disagreement, anxiety, and stress.
- **Democratic Process and a Commitment to Positive Social Change:** As a group of co-researchers into the work of the participants, we, as a research community, committed to being reflective and responsive to the perspectives of all stakeholders and participants, agreeing that all members of the community have value, experience, and expertise.
- **Transparency/Accountability:** At each phase of this research, the data belonged to the participants, as do the conclusions drawn from that data. To promote accountability to each other, I shared the data and analysis process with the participants to confirm my understanding and to correct any discrepancies. This transparency provided an opportunity to understand meaning and consensus as a group and highlighted disagreements within the community of stakeholders. These disagreements offered value as they shed light on different values in the group and offered insight into the next steps.

3.9 Data Credibility

Creswell (2006) offered several criteria for “good” qualitative research. Yet he also stated, “A good research process can do much more than generate data. In the best cases, it builds relationships, and in the very best cases, it builds relationships across differences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 54). In light of the different qualities of good qualitative research, I have used several criteria to build this study:

- Broad stakeholder engagement: I invited broad stakeholder participation to ensure that a diverse selection of the educational community was informing the study. While recognizing that much of the research is housed within the power structure of the school system, the families involved in the study must be able to voice their experiences and needs. Triangulating the data across the different stakeholder groups allowed me to point out areas of disagreement or misunderstanding that informed additional work (Kendon, 2010).
- Rigorous data collection (Creswell, 2006): I used interview recordings and field notes. I facilitated focus group meetings using semi-structured protocols for guiding the conversation and data collection, yet allowed the participants to direct the discussion toward what mattered most to the community.
- Detailing methods for collection, analysis, and reporting with the participants in the study allowed member-checking throughout the study's design (Miles et al., 2013). Member checking of the analysis was employed throughout to improve

data quality and conclusions and iteratively guide the research toward the community's needs through the expertise of lived experiences.

CHAPTER 4: JOURNAL ARTICLE

DEVELOPMENT OF A USER-FRIENDLY MEASUREMENT TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS WITH REFUGEE FAMILIES: A COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION STUDY

4.1 Abstract

The purpose of this Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) study was to work with local stakeholders involved in the RAFT (Relationships Among Families and Teachers) Project pilot study (Haines & Reyes, 2022a) to identify the constructs necessary to understand the impacts of RAFT implementation and build a tool to assess those constructs. The Participatory Action Research Team (PART) involved in this study included school administrators, Multilingual (ML) teachers, classroom teachers, home-school liaisons, and families. The PART participated in three focus groups and eight cognitive interviews to develop an understanding of the goals of RAFT implementation and design a survey to measure the impact of RAFT using those goals. Three goals or constructs emerged that were of primary importance behind the motivation for schools and families to use the RAFT Protocol: (a) School-Family Connection, (b) Student Success, and (c) Unified Welcoming School Culture and were used to build a survey known as the Tool to Assess the RAFT Protocol (TARP). The purpose of the TARP was to increase the understanding of how the RAFT Protocol impacts relationships between refugee families and school staff. Schools and districts will use the data from the TARP to make decisions on how to allocate resources to sustain ongoing implementation

of the RAFT Protocol and thereby adjust practice and policy in the classroom and district to create stronger connections with families to support their students.

4.2 Introduction

Worldwide 82.4 million people are currently forcibly displaced; of those, 26.4 million have received formal refugee status from the United Nations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020a). Of that number, only one percent of all refugees are resettled across the 27 nations providing permanent refugee resettlement (UNHCR, 2022a). Of those nations, the United States is the world's largest destination for refugee resettlement. 38% of refugees under the care of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), are school-aged children (UNHCR, 2022b).

Enrolling children in local schools is one of the top priorities of refugee resettlement (UNHCR, 2022b). Yet, frequently the tools available in schools are not adequate for supporting the needs of recently resettled students (MacNevin, 2012). Although US education policy has mandated collaboration with schools and families in both the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)(ESSA, 2015; IDEA, 2004), these Federal statutes have not defined how this is to be accomplished. Therefore, all too often, schools lack clarity and training on developing and implementing these partnerships with families (Haines et al., 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Turnbull and colleagues (2022) defined Family Professional Partnerships (FPPs) as “alliances in which families and professionals confidently build on each other’s word, judgment, and wise actions to increase educational benefits for students and themselves” (p. 9). FPPs have been shown to benefit students, families, and teachers (Turnbull et al., 2022). The literature has demonstrated that FPPs improve student academic and social outcomes (Turnbull et al., 2006), families experience less stress when they have FPPs with their children's educators (Burke & Hodapp, 2014), and school systems that prioritize a culture of collaborative FPPs increase internal support for teachers building FPPs (Haines & Reyes, 2022b).

Following exploratory research that found that organic relationship formation was lacking between refugee families and their children’s teachers (Haines et al., 2021; Reyes et al., 2021); Haines and Reyes (2022a) developed a protocol to guide teachers and families through a relationship-building conversation. The conversation tool, called the Relationships Among Families and Teachers (RAFT) Protocol, was developed using Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) techniques. They situated this research in two small cities in the Northeastern U.S. that have become home to more than 8,000 resettled refugees since 1980 (USCRI Vermont, 2022.). During the pilot study using the RAFT Protocol with students, families, and school professionals, Haines and Reyes (2022a) found that all the teacher participants desired to continue implementing the tool and all participants were satisfied with participating in the pilot study.

In this study, I build on the pilot study that developed the RAFT Protocol (Haines & Reyes, 2022a) by guiding stakeholders through a process to develop an assessment tool to understand the outcomes of the administration of the RAFT protocol. Additionally, this study increases the amount of actionable data received by stakeholders and provides a tool that can assess and thereby sustain the ongoing implementation of the RAFT protocol (Fixsen et al., 2013; Mandinach et al., 2006; Schildkamp et al., 2013).

4.3 Context and Literature Review

4.3.1 Definition of Refugee Populations

The word “refugee” has become a popular and vague term to describe anyone who has been displaced. Yet, international law provides refugee protections for a narrower definition of displaced peoples (Dauvergne, 2008). According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is any person who:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, 2010, p. 3)

The population of resettled refugees is growing worldwide, with the most significant portion within the United States (UNHCR, 2022c). The US has a long history of refugee resettlement. After the conclusion of World War II, Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 to regulate the massive influx of refugees coming from Europe (US Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2021). From 1975 through

the beginning of 2022, the US resettled over 3.4 million refugees, with annual admissions ranging from 27,110 to 207,000 (Refugee Processing Center, 2022; UNHCR, 2021).

Although 27 nations offer resettlement services, the US resettles more refugees than all other nations combined, with a total quota of 125,000 possible resettlements in 2022 (Refugee Processing Center, 2022).

Refugee resettlement has changed the cultural landscape of Northwestern Vermont, notable as Vermont has regularly been ranked as the “whitest state” in the US (US Census Bureau, 2022). Over the last 44 years, Vermont has received over 8,000 new refugees (USCRI Vermont, 2022). The school district involved in this study began receiving students through the refugee resettlement program in 1980, and now over 30% of enrolled students are receiving services or being monitored by the Multilingual (ML) Learners program (Gonzalez, 2018). This demographic shift is typical throughout the US: smaller resettlement cities and specific neighborhoods are becoming dramatically more culturally diverse as new refugees arrive (Bose, 2020).

4.3.2 Family Professional Partnerships

When the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was first adopted, initially titled The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, it provided parents the right to partner with school professionals to make decisions about their children’s education (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1975). This idea of school-family partnership continued with the authoring of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). ESSA states that “Each local educational agency (...) shall develop

jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy” [Sec.1116(a)(2)]. In addition, “an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement policy” shall be conducted with “meaningful involvement of parents and family members” [Sec.1116(a)(2)(D)]. The law includes specific provisions for “identifying barriers to greater participation by parents (...) (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background)” [Sec.1116(a)(2)(D)(i)].

While the educational policy in the United States articulates the rights of families to be involved in the educational planning for their children, the operationalization of this policy is highly variable, and too often, schools do not adequately plan or prepare to implement this policy effectively (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Haines et al., 2021; Mandarakas, 2014; Turnbull et al., 2009). Studies have shown that teachers have minimal pre-service training in developing relationships with families (Kyzar et al., 2019; Lasater, 2016). Due to this lack of training and preparation, teachers often lack the confidence to partner with families (Francis et al., 2021). There is also a historical lack of clarity around what an FPP can or should look like (Dunst, 2000). This lack of understanding leads to misunderstanding of family and school professionals' expectations. Ambiguity around the expectations of FPPs impacts families' motivation to

invest time and energy in partnering, and the hierarchal power dynamics of family-school relationships create additional barriers to partnership (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017).

While FPPs can be essential in fostering student success, they can also facilitate equitable access to cultural expectations between educators and families. There are significant equity concerns around access to educational opportunities for ML students and students coming from historically marginalized populations (Gorski, 2016). Additionally, misunderstandings during personal interactions with families can occur due to differences in culture, language, educational experiences, and behavioral and parental expectations (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016; Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012). FPPs may also impact parent-teacher power dynamics as school staff and families share their perspectives and expectations while building working relationships (Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012). Moreover, without explicit effort to build respectful working relationships, implicit bias can build up over time as differences in backgrounds impact interactions between educators and families (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016).

Georgis et al. (2014) found that culture brokers, deployed from resettlement community organizations or employed by schools, played a significant role in developing trust and relationships with refugee families. This study informs practice by illustrating the need to engage families based not only on school needs but also on the needs of families. By engaging families in the design of family partnerships, schools will be better equipped to meet the needs of students and families as well as accomplish their objectives.

DeCapua and Marshall (2015) stated that strong connections between teachers, students, and families are important to creating a fertile environment for successful learning for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). This paper directly supports the need for FPPs with SLIFE students. Weine (2008) suggested that families should serve as integral support for students' education and through engaging with schools to help develop culturally relevant curricula.

Although the literature repeatedly finds that there are significant barriers to developing successful FPPs, such as limited training, access to language and communication supports, and teacher bias (Cun, 2020; Kyzar et al., 2019; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009), it also suggests that refugee families seek to be more involved in their children's education and to be more engaged with their schools (Cun, 2020). Koyama and Bakuza found that refugee parents were deeply engaged in their children's educational success and advocated for their families through partnerships with schools and community members to understand the local educational system and culture (2017). Weine (2008) suggested that it is critical to engage families in any educational intervention for refugee youth as families are the central social context for resettled refugee students and provide valuable resources to help youth traverse the various traumas of the resettlement experience. Weine indicated that it is imperative for any intervention with refugee families to spend adequate time engaging families to allow the intervention to have the full support of the family members and that doing so would create a more welcoming culture for refugee students and families.

Safe and welcoming school environments promote the development of FPPs and enable parents to engage more readily (Cureton, 2020). To facilitate FPPs, refugee families and children need to be welcomed and provided with adequate support (McBrien, 2005). Additionally, the literature on FPPs finds the importance of a unified organizational vision and mission around creating a welcoming culture (Sheridan & Moorman Kim, 2016a). Recently, Haines and Reyes (2022b) sought to understand the teacher's perspective on what helps to facilitate or to hinder the development of cooperative interpersonal relationships between teachers and families from the refugee community. They found that school systems with an organization-wide focus on building FPPs had a culture of support that facilitated student-centered cross-organizational partnerships. To create a culture of support for FPPs, schools need to examine their cultural bias, white privilege, the cultural entitlement of the school community, and unspoken expectations to build strong FPPs (Hill & Torres, 2010; Smith, 2005). To do this, school staff must improve their willingness to provide information, communicate, and build bridges with families beyond just parents. When schools support parents in this manner, parents can become a part of the decision-making community (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017).

If we think of refugee communities as homogenous and focus on the refugee versus majority culture identity, we veil the personal complexity of refugee students and their families' experiences, strengths, and needs (Dávila, 2021). The research consistently supports the value of developing an organization-wide vision of the importance of FPPs.

When this happens, it empowers school staff to work together to partner with refugee family members, and it empowers family members to engage as experts in the decision making-community (Ishimaru, 2019). Such organization-wide vision communicates roles and possibilities explicitly and consistently and facilitates FPP.

4.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to sustain the implementation of the RAFT protocol and thereby improve relationships between refugee families and schools. To do so, I relied on CBPAR methodologies and an Appreciative Inquiry (AI; Cooperrider, 2017) approach to collaborate with a school district to discover what worked for them, dream about how they envisioned using the RAFT protocol to develop FPPs, and design an assessment tool that would support ongoing implementation. Specifically, this study used CBPAR and survey research methods to discover what constructs should be measured to understand the outcomes of the RAFT Protocol administration and how to measure them.

The experiences and insights from the Participatory Action Research Team (PART) informed a generative process of designing an assessment tool to ensure that the RAFT protocol meets the identified needs in sustainable, efficient, and effective ways. Using this tool, the TARP will also increase the amount of actionable data received by stakeholders to empower schools to continue using the RAFT protocol to develop strong relationships between refugee families and school professionals. The central research question guiding this study is: What constructs should schools assess to understand RAFT outcomes, and how can they measure them?

4.5 Conceptual Framework

At the highest level, I relied on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model because it focuses on the interactions of the various systems that influence human development. I used CBPAR as my methodological perspective because it best mirrors the findings associated with successful FPPs. It is a collaborative methodology that treats the participants like partners in the research rather than setting up the researcher as primarily driving the research focus and perspective. Finally, I relied on an AI lens to acknowledge the participants' expertise in interpreting the data, identifying the findings, and dreaming up a tool that would be useful to them in supporting ongoing implementation. Specifically, I relied on AI to specify how we should assess the results of the RAFT Protocol administration from the unique perspectives of pilot participants to design an assessment tool that would provide data on the effect of using the RAFT Protocol to provide a rationale for ongoing implementation and inform classroom and district practice and policy.

4.5.1 Ecological Model of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualized child development through the lens of systems of relationships in his work on the Ecological System of Human Development. He described these complex systems of relationships as nested circles surrounding the child, where the closest systems had the most significant impact on the child's development. The innermost ring, the microsystem, consists of the activities, roles, and relationships experienced by a person. The mesosystem encompasses the interactions and

relationships between different microsystems that a person engages in regularly (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). More specifically, the mesosystem represents how people interact to influence the individual. For this research, the focus is on how FPPs exist in the mesosystem as an interaction between the school and family, influencing the individual student. The Ecological Model of Human Development provides a framework for understanding how FPPs impact the development of students through the interaction of different microsystems of a student's life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated, "A child's ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he is taught than on the existence and nature of ties between the school and home" (p. 3). This framework focuses on how the student functions within the school, their family, how the school and the family interact, and how this interaction can affect the student's development.

Relying on the Ecological Model of Human Development as a framework allowed me to use this current research to view the interactions between families and schools not only as a positive interaction for relationships but to understand that those relationships are significant and necessary to the personal development of students. I focused this study on the often overlooked mesosystem because the mesosystem, as an essential element in students' development, can be influenced to impact student development through the students' existing support structures (Sheridan & Garbacz, 2022).

4.5.2 Community-Based Participatory Action Research

Using a theoretical perspective that empowers interaction between the family and school participants lends itself to relying on a methodological perspective that likewise empowers the participants. For this reason, CBPAR is the most appropriate approach for this study. Fine (2008) defines CBPAR as an approach to research devoted to social justice that is seated in the context of community cooperation and committed to making change.

The term CBPAR covers a variety of research approaches that individually focus more or less on each of the words in the title (i.e., Community-Based, Participatory, or Action). Yet, amid this broad field of research, common elements emerge across the methods:

1. the research is community-based, or rather engages the community, and it promotes collaboration between stakeholders and the researchers, at times blurring the lines between roles so that all participants are responsible for the research agenda as co-researchers,
2. the researchers intend to make change or to be actionable in the field, and
3. the research uses inclusive methods that allow understanding by a broad audience (Israel et al., 1998; Kondon, 2010; Stoecker, 2013).

CBPAR breaks down the power dynamics between researcher and participant and is grounded in the belief that community members provide expertise and add credibility to the findings (Kondon, 2010). Researchers using CBPAR seek out and value

the expertise of the community and the participants. More input from the community results in a more understandable and applicable study that significantly impacts practice based on the research findings.

4.5.3 Appreciative Inquiry

AI provided a lens whereby the strengths of a situation can be identified and capitalized upon to enact positive change, rather than conducting research from a deficit perspective. AI, as envisioned by Cooperrider (2017), is a philosophical approach to action research that rests on four fundamental principles:

- 1) grounded observation to identify the best of what is,
- 2) vision and logic to identify ideals of what might be,
- 3) collaborative dialogue and choice to achieve consent about what should be and,
- 4) collective experimentation to discover what can be (Bushe, 2011, p. 87).

This approach to action research added to the methods of CBPAR by giving the stakeholders the responsibility to envision a better world through their experiences and definitions of what is best without critiquing previous work or damaging relationships with peers. This generative approach to what-can-be or rather "creative theorizing" focused on the strengths of each involved and situated progress as beneficial to all parties (Cooperrider, 2017, p. 95). As such, this approach aligned with FPPs in that they both identify the strengths in a given situation and capitalize on and utilize them to bring about positive outcomes for all parties involved.

4.5.4 Conceptual Framework

I framed this study within the interactions of a given student's mesosystem, where the student's family-based microsystem interacts with the student's school-based microsystem. Facilitating interactions between these two microsystems is the goal of the RAFT Protocol. Understanding the outcomes of these interactions is the goal of the TARP. By understanding the effects of these interactions, as described by the TARP data, schools can iteratively adjust the RAFT Protocol implementation to improve results and support ongoing implementation. Moreover, these data will inform the relationships between families, schools, and their students.

The research question for this study is: What constructs should schools assess to understand RAFT outcomes, and how can they measure them? This question impacts the TARP's development and probes the school's motivation to continue implementing the RAFT Protocol. That motivation informed what questions we included in the TARP, how it will be implemented, and what validated tools will be included in the field study to assess the specific constructs necessary to understand RAFT outcomes identified by the stakeholders.

Within this conceptual framework, I used CBPAR methodologies to value the inputs of the school personnel, the family members, and their interactions to develop the TARP. These same methodologies were also used to develop the RAFT Protocol. I used AI and CBPAR to create the TARP through a survey development process with the input of stakeholders. I chose an AI approach in conjunction with CBPAR to build upon the

work of the RAFT Protocol and receive guidance through the participants' input. The data produced by the TARP will provide a window into the impacts of the RAFT Protocol administration and ways that the Protocol or its implementation may require additional modification. This data will be valuable in providing a clear understanding of the value of RAFT administration and will be helpful in the determination of resource allocation for ongoing implementation.

4.6 Methods

The goals for this research were to provide a process and product (TARP) for school and family use that efficiently utilizes school and community resources to provide a clear understanding of the outcomes of implementing the RAFT Protocol. With this understanding, schools and families with a refugee background will be able to more quickly and efficiently understand how using the RAFT protocol has impacted their relationships and communities and adjust classroom and district practice and policy accordingly. Additionally, the TARP will provide data on the efficacy and value of implementing the RAFT Protocol to help inform future implementation. The methods for this study were chosen to support these research goals.

I used CBPAR and survey research methods to collect and analyze data that informed the development of a survey instrument to assess the effect of future RAFT Protocol implementations. This section will explain why this particular approach is appropriate and essential for this study. Furthermore, I will present data collection and

analysis steps to ensure data credibility, such as relying on interrater reliability and member checking throughout the analysis process.

For this study, the data collection included a series of focus groups used to define the constructs within the design of the TARP. During the focus groups, I collected the perspectives of a broad range of educational community members on the benefits of administering the RAFT Protocol and what value it provides to schools and families.

4.6.1 Survey Design Methodology

The TARP is a survey instrument designed to measure three constructs of RAFT implementation. We completed a specific order of tasks to develop this instrument, requiring two different data collection methodologies. The design process contained two essential elements, “deciding what to measure and designing and testing questions that will be good measures” (Fowler, 2014, p.99).

First, I facilitated two focus groups with the PART to determine the constructs of most concern, or rather what to measure, along with the most appropriate format for the instrument (Fowler, 2014). Second, based on the analysis of the focus group data, as organized in an analytic report, I drafted a set of preliminary survey items for critical review and cognitive interviews (Fowler, 2014). A critical review involves critiquing the questions based on existing lists of question standards and testing them with friends and colleagues (Fowler, 2014; Lessler & Forsyth, 1996). Through this process, I began refining the questions prior to systematically analyzing the items with stakeholders through cognitive interviews. Just as focus group participants were chosen for their

unique perspectives on the topic to provide expert opinions on the constructs and questions used in the final survey, cognitive interview participants offered unique views of the target population for critiquing and analyzing the preliminary questions. Through cognitive interviews, I aimed to discover participants' problems with survey questions before field testing with a larger sample size (Willis, 2015). Through this understanding, I refined and removed survey questions from the protocol. Finally, I ordered the survey questions to be most accessible and understood to the participant population and presented them to the PART during the final focus group. During this focus group, we finalized the items and format of the TARP for future field testing (Fowler, 2014).

4.6.2 Research Design

I used a CBPAR design to develop the TARP in cooperation with the PART. Based on the conceptual framework, I gathered input from the PART that informed the development of the TARP. The data produced by the TARP aims to inform classroom and district policy and practice, provide a clear understanding of the value of RAFT implementation, and therefore be helpful in resource allocation for ongoing implementation.

4.6.3 Setting and Participants

I conducted this study in a small city in the Northeastern U.S. that has become home to more than 8,000 resettled refugees since 1980 (USCRI Vermont, 2022). This city's school district participated in the original pilot study of Project RAFT and has a diverse student body primarily made up of resettled refugee families.

For this study, the PART included two school administrators, two EL teachers, a Home-School Liaison, and a parent. We recruited these participants from the RAFT pilot study participants. The stakeholder group taking part in the cognitive interviews included two families, three Home-School Liaisons, an EL teacher, a classroom teacher, and a district administrator. The stakeholder group had families with a refugee background who participated in the RAFT Project pilot study. I refer to all participants throughout this study with pseudonyms to protect their identities. In the next section, I will describe the data collection methods used in this study.

4.6.4 Data Collection Methods

The phases of this study included three in-person 1.5-hour focus groups and eight in-person cognitive interviews with pilot study participants. See Table 1 for a summary of the data collection activities and objectives. In the first focus group, we discussed what type of data would be valuable for the group to know as a result of the RAFT implementation and defined three constructs to be measured by the TARP. During the second focus group, I presented, for discussion and feedback, preliminary survey items based on the constructs that emerged from the first focus group and three validated measures that fit the identified constructs.

Additionally, the second focus group determined the platform and structure of the TARP. The group decided that the best TARP implementation method was as a pre- and post-assessment of future RAFT Protocol implementations to give direct feedback to education professionals. The tool contained 15 items measuring three constructs.

After the PART crafted the preliminary TARP questions, I recruited, with the help of the district administrators, participants from each of the stakeholder categories to take part in cognitive interviews to determine the following:

1. If the questions were consistently understood?
2. Did respondents have the information needed to answer the questions?
3. Did the answers accurately describe what the respondents had to say?
4. Did the answers provide valid measures of what the question was designed to measure? (Fowler, 2014, p. 103)

After analysis of the cognitive interview data, I made changes to the TARP questions and format for presentation to the PART during the final focus group to confirm appropriate changes. We discussed the current state of the TARP; discussed suggested changes; built group consensus around the tool format, design, layout, and implementation, and finalized the TARP for a future field test.

4.6.5 Data Analysis

Participatory data analysis is an ongoing, iterative, and subjectively fraught process (Kindon, 2010; Miles et al., 2013). When engaging different groups of stakeholder participants, the process is bound to encounter different values, goals, and opinions, which may lead to conflicting views. CBPAR positions participants as co-researchers rather than research subjects (Kindon, 2010; Stoecker, 2013), which allows participants to have the power to determine the direction of the research. Throughout this study, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently as the participants'

conversations impacted the path of the data collection within the focus groups and cognitive interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focusing on CBPAR methodologies, I acted as an organizer rather than an interpreter (Stoecker, 2013), with the hope that my subjectivity was not the only lens through which we viewed the data. For example, as the organizer, I was sometimes tasked with moderating consensus-building within the groups. In this role, I acknowledge that within the population of stakeholders involved in this study, including myself, there was a complex power dynamic that existed between participants that belonged to historically marginalized groups (refugees/non-English speaking and foreign-born) and those that had the power to control the implementation of the tools designed by this study. My role included balancing that power dynamic to ensure equity across all participants so that all voices had a say in the outcomes of this study. To do this I used Krueger and Casey's (2015) Pause and Probe technique (p. 120). For example, I ensured that every person had an opportunity to respond to each question by pausing and offering an opportunity to respond for individuals who had remained silent during conversations. Additionally, to address issues of power dynamics, when a person in a position of power within the group offered a comment that was contrary to other participants, I acknowledged that person's role of power in everyday life within the group, but that in the focus group, all voices and opinions were valuable and necessary. I then invited thoughts from the rest of the group even if they disagreed with the person in power.

Throughout this study, stakeholders were given the task of data production and analysis, and therefore knowledge producers of the collected data, and I was there to organize an iterative path to their community understanding. At the same time, I was cognizant of the real-world constraints of the stakeholders that enabled them to participate in this study. As an example of real-world constraints, one of the participants was absent from the first focus group due to an international family emergency and another administrator who had been key in the inception of this study was on family leave throughout the data collection period.

The data analysis consisted of organizing and coding data collected from the focus groups using a Key Concepts analytic framework, which allowed the PART and me to identify the core ideas of how participants viewed the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). See a summary of the analysis in Table 2. After each focus group, I transcribed the meeting recording and reviewed it for completeness and clarity. I then coded the transcriptions and organized the codes into themes. I organized these themes into analysis reports for each question of the questioning route (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I used the analytic reports to draft preliminary TARP questions and select validated measures for presentation at the following focus group. The second focus group underwent the same analysis strategy and provided a round of member checking prior to the cognitive interviews to collect their feedback on the preliminary questions and the proposed measures. Three examples of measures that met the needs of the stakeholders included: the Student Trust in Faculty Survey (Adams & Forsyth, 2009), the Parent Trust in School

Scale (W. K. Hoy & Miskel, 2004), and the Family Professional Partnership Scale (Summers et al., 2005).

Additionally, the second focus group developed the format and length of the draft TARP used in the cognitive interviews. The stakeholders determined that the TARP would be most accessible as an online tool. I built the online form using Google Forms as the preferred survey tool of the school district.

Similarly, I transcribed, coded, and organized the data from the cognitive interviews. After coding, I compiled a Project Text Summary, or an organized report of all themes across the different interviews (Willis, 2015). Following the Project Text Summary development, I used the summary to edit the draft TARP questions and tool format. After analyzing the cognitive interviews, I presented an edited TARP during the third focus group for final revisions and editing.

4.7 Results

This process yielded three constructs to understand the impacts of RAFT implementation: School-Family Connection, Student Success, and Unified Welcoming Culture. The PART created measurable objectives from these constructs to develop questions for the TARP. This section will describe the three constructs, along with how the TARP items were developed to assess them.

4.7.1 School-Family Connection

The School-Family Connection construct involves the development of trusting relationships through two-way communication between schools and families. Participants

talked about this connection when discussing the main goals of implementing RAFT. Mohsin, the new district ML Department director (who had not been involved in the RAFT pilot) said, “to me the most valuable part of doing this [RAFT] is really connecting with families and not making them feel left out of school communication, especially when it comes to their children.”

He also said,

Parent involvement is a huge piece of growth. I like the idea of RAFT, mostly because I have always rejected the idea of not calling a parent until we, the school, or a teacher, runs into a hard or difficult situation or a problem and then calls a parent. Only calling a parent when it's already really bad.

When discussing the most valuable outcomes of administering the RAFT Protocol, Alma, a Home-School Liaison, discussed the power of breaking down relational barriers by being together in a family's home,

I don't want to brag and say I know everything about the family and the teachers, but RAFT, gives us that, too, to open the space for the teacher and the family to know something. They don't know before about each other. Like I was surprised. Oh, the teacher really doesn't know this. I surprised the family. Oh, they really don't know this, you know. So, it's sending you we went to a totally different level of understanding for each other.

Additionally, Esther, an ML teacher, discussed the power of understanding the internal family dynamics through her experiences participating in a RAFT Protocol conversation within a student's home,

One thing I really appreciated was how it brought all the family members together...they had older siblings who were present... And I remember... the older sister was able to lift up their sibling... It's a really cool experience. So there's that sort of like family connection within the same family... We had both the father and the mother and you kind of see the roles between, and... just sort of get a grasp of what is the family communication and the roles for that student between their parents and their homes.

Gurratan, a Nepali-speaking liaison, discussed the fear of police that newcomers had from their experiences of being displaced and living in refugee camps, and how building relationships with school staff can dramatically change how families interact with schools and teachers.

We cannot bring their [scared parents] to this school. So, we encourage them to come but they never come, because of the trauma. So, some were detained by the military, back in the country. In the eye of them, when they see the police are in school, they are scared and they can't speak. I know them they speak good but you know, for some reason, they can't speak.

From the familial standpoint, the connection to the school after RAFT significantly improved. Najam, a mother who had participated in the RAFT Project, said,

I felt the connection more effective on working more like I thought that when the teachers come to my house and after that, the teachers keep informed me about what was happening with my son and when I need to pay attention and what's happening with him.

The implications of this construct are that the participants, both school-based and family-based, desire a more significant partnership between teachers and families within the school setting. They need to understand how to build these relationships to get to this place. The RAFT protocol can play a significant role in facilitating these relationships: by providing a safe space for relationship building that is not based on a response to negative behaviors or actions and allowing the whole family to be a part of a student-centered conversation aimed at learning about the student through the lens of relationships.

4.7.2 Student Success

The Student Success construct was based on the primary goal of the families and the school district for participating in the RAFT Project pilot study. The families' primary motivation for participation was their children's academic success, while the school personnel's primary motivation for selecting students to be a part of the pilot study was to understand and improve student behavior. When I asked Najam, a parent, what her main goal for participating in the RAFT Project was, she said, "The first big idea I had was to improve Akmal's [her son's] academic [performance]." When I asked the school professionals the same question, Alma said,

first, improve students' work. It's not just work; it's everything, it's related to everything of theirs and not just academic work, educational experience. I think we all share that feeling. It's to solve something we notice but we cannot figure out what it's happening.”

When asked to elaborate, she continued,

Like those students that we chose before, they all raised some questions during the day, during the work, during their school days. I need to understand more about these students.

She discussed how schools have historically chosen students to participate in RAFT because they want to understand more fully what is going on in a student's life such that the standard practices that result in academic or behavioral improvements with most students are not having the same impact.

Although it may seem like there was tension between the goals of the two groups of participants, both groups were describing what student success looked like from their specific perspectives. Teachers focused more on behavior and engagement rather than the outcome of better grades. Families were not in the classroom and therefore did not focus as much on behaviors, they viewed the outcome measure of their children's learning as the primary measure of student success. Consequently, they understood their children's educational success through the lens of graded academic performance. The correlation of these perspectives can be seen by Najam's response to being asked about what she thought was most valuable about being a part of the RAFT Project for her and

her family, “I felt like [there was] improvement with Abi's academic [performance] and with his behavior and how he is changing.”

Notably, participants suggested that students’ stronger relationships with faculty and staff and stronger relationships between their families and the school professionals impacted their feelings of inclusion and belonging to the school community. The participants felt a strong connection between family-school relationships and student success. Norma, an ML teacher, said, “the better relationship you have with the family, the better relationship you're going to have with the student, and it will make the classroom experience all the more positive.” Similarly, the family involved in the focus groups clearly stated that their main goal for participation was to improve their child's academic performance, and they felt like this would happen because of improved relationships with their son’s teachers, whom they hoped would provide increased attention to their son’s academic needs after getting to know him and the family through the RAFT Project.

In this study, the participants defined student success through improved social, emotional, and academic experiences. The primary motivation for family involvement in the RAFT Project was their children’s academic improvement, while schools focused on improving their students’ overall educational experience, including behavioral, social, and academic achievement. While this seems like there may have been tension between these two goals, it appeared from the conversations with both groups to be two sides of the same coin, or rather both groups were seeking student success in the ways that they

engaged with the students. Teachers were engaged with student behavior and the holistic process of student success which included getting to the result of grades, whereas parents were only seeing the culmination of that process resulting in grades. Therefore, both groups of participants felt that using the RAFT Protocol would improve the educational experiences and outcomes for the involved students.

4.7.3 Unified Welcoming School Culture

Throughout the focus group discussions, it became apparent that participants felt that not everyone working in the district valued interacting and partnering with ML families in the same way. The school-based participants felt that a fundamental goal of implementing the RAFT Protocol was not just to impact the relationship between the school staff and the family members but also to impact the relationships of the varied school staff attending the RAFT Protocol meetings. The PART hoped that through the experience of sitting with a student and their family, all the school staff, across departments and specialties, would find value in interacting with and developing collaborative relationships with students' family members. Throughout our discussions, it became clear that a fundamental goal of ongoing RAFT implementation would be to create unity in the overall school culture toward building relationships with and welcoming the involvement of ML families in the educational experiences of their students. This goal became known for the sake of this study as the goal of a Unified, Welcoming School Culture. We defined this goal as a school culture that values and

facilitates relationships and collaborations with ML families across the spectrum of school professionals.

During the focus groups, Esther discussed the power of visiting the student's home during the RAFT Project pilot study:

I feel like for me, the experience I had going with classroom teachers, taking them to places like they had never done a home visit before, they didn't know what the inside of any of their students' homes looked like. They didn't know what they ate; they didn't know what their routines were. So, this was a really great opportunity to have that knowledge base that we already have that they're not going to have as a classroom teacher.

It became clear that some of the staff in the ML Department felt like the classroom teachers were not as prepared to engage families and felt the classroom teachers wanted the ML teachers to be the conduit between them and ML students and their families. Esther said,

we [ML teachers] have those connections and familiarity with families and culture and language even. And I feel like, for me, having classroom teachers come, it's like a lot of times we walked the line between our students and my students and your students. And I think not necessarily because they don't want them as their students, but they feel like they don't have that understanding and expertise that we have.

Interestingly, this concept came up a lot around home visits. The ML team thought that home visits were essential to engaging families. They also felt classroom teachers were less inclined to participate in home visits, especially outside their contracted hours. Esther described the response to a school-wide mandate for teachers to visit students' homes:

I think it was 2019 at some point. They're like everybody's going to do a home visit, and teachers flat out refused. They had no intention. They had to desire and feel like no we don't want to do it so they scrapped it.

It was interesting to notice that this feeling of disconnection from the classroom teachers did not necessarily impact all areas of the school district equally. In addition, during a cognitive interview with Rachel, a high school ML teacher, she discussed how the difference in schedules between teaching in elementary school and Middle and High Schools impacts the classroom teachers' ability to plan meetings to connect with ML families:

There is definitely a difference... The elementary teachers have the least amount of prep and planning time...It's easier for me [as a high school teacher] to have someone cover my class of 10 children versus, covering my whole classroom of 22 kids [as an elementary school teacher] to go to this meeting [with parents].

Encouragingly, she went on to discuss that due to the RAFT Project Pilot study, the district made it a goal to be more welcoming for families and students, and to do so, had made philosophical and structural changes to the school to develop a more welcoming environment for ML families. This goal translated into several initiatives: (a)

creating a new position to improve family and community engagement, (b) moving the welcome center and Home-School Liaison office during a whole school redesign to be near the front entrance of the school to be more accessible to families “so that as soon as families came in there would be a place and people to greet them and make them feel welcome, and help them get where they're going”; and (c) invested in translation headsets to facilitate community involvement in large group events like graduation.

The ML director confirmed a difference in the school cultures across the district. He felt there was more of a unified culture in the high school than in the elementary. He wanted to encourage all teachers across the district to engage families in the classroom and school-based activities. It was encouraging to see the changes being enacted based on the district’s involvement in the RAFT pilot study. It was also clear that there was continued work to be done to create a united school culture around partnering with ML families.

4.7.4 Developing the TARP

The TARP is a survey designed to be administered before the RAFT Protocol administration and then again three months later. The intention is to use the tool to understand better the impacts of using RAFT with ML families and school staff and how RAFT impacts the three constructs that informed the TARP development: School-Family Connection, Student Success, and the Unified Welcoming School Culture around working with ML families.

We used these three constructs in constructing TARP by developing several measurable objectives organized within each construct. We deconstructed each of the main goals of RAFT implementation into more discreet measurable objectives that we could probe through survey questions more precisely. During the initial focus group, we discussed different measurable objectives that we could explore to understand how to measure the primary constructs mentioned above. From these conversations, we created 32 measurable objectives organized under the overarching constructs, see Table 3. For example, within the construct of School-Family Connection, 15 measurable objectives were informed by the data. Some examples of these measurable objectives were: (a) Family Engagement, (b) Family Feels Valued, and (c) Family Understanding of the School Environment and Culture.

After the first focus group, I drafted 143 preliminary survey items based on the 32 measurable objectives of the three primary constructs. As there was a limited amount of time available to work with the whole PART during the focus group, I created these preliminary survey items to be a starting point for the PART to craft the final survey items, see Table 4 for a list of the preliminary items. I wrote the items to be administered with both school staff and families. The PART then reviewed the items during the second focus group to further organize, refine the language used, and reduce the total number of items. As an example of this process, for the objective of Family Engagement, I identified these example preliminary items: (a) I know the names of my child's teachers, (b) I know the names of my student's family, (c) I know what is happening in my child's

classes, (d) I know how to help my child with schoolwork, and (e) How often do I go into the school?

After the PART revised the items based on appropriateness, use, and clarity, we reduced the total number of items to 21 for each audience (school and family).

Continuing the example from earlier, the five preliminary items listed were edited and reduced to two: (a) I know my student's family members, and (b) I create opportunities for students' families to participate in school activities. Additionally, the focus group determined that, of the available validated scales that we reviewed, the Family Professional Partnership Scale (Summers et al., 2005) was the most appropriate to be administered with the TARP during a future field study as a validated measure of School Family Relationships.

Once the PART refined the preliminary items, I conducted eight cognitive interviews with an ML teacher, a classroom teacher, two parents, three Home-School liaisons, and a district administrator. These interviews were another layer of member checking to refine the language and reduce items. After the second focus group and before the cognitive interviews, I aligned the list of items for school staff and families so that each audience would receive items focused on the same constructs and objectives. I removed any item based on an objective that both audiences could not answer.

After the interviews, I reviewed the items and edited them further for presentation during the final focus group. The list of items presented to the last focus group contained 17 items, which we reduced to 15 during our discussions. The final

TARP included two lists of 15 items, one for administration with school staff and one for use with families. During the last focus group, we refined the demographic questions to include Student Gender, Family Home Language, Student Grade, Participant Role, and Timing before or after RAFT. An organized list of TARP items can be found in Figure 1. The final draft of the TARP can be found in Table 5.

Figure 1

TARP Items Organized by Construct

TARP Family-based Items

Family-School Connection items 1-8

Student Success items 9-13

Unified, Welcoming School Culture items 14-15

1. I know my student's family members.
2. I feel comfortable having my student's family visit my class.
3. I learn about my student from their family.
4. I feel comfortable communicating with my student's family.
5. I would feel comfortable visiting my student's home.
6. I feel comfortable partnering with multilingual families to support my multilingual students.
7. I cooperate with families to understand student behavior.
8. I regularly share what my student is learning with their family.
9. My student participates in afterschool activities such as academic support, sports, or clubs.
10. My student is motivated and engaged in school.
11. My student is meeting attendance expectations.
12. I differentiate how I teach based on my student's background, strengths, and needs.
13. My student is able to meet behavior expectations in school.
14. I collaborate with district colleagues to support my multilingual students.
15. The school creates opportunities for student's families to participate in school activities.

TARP Family-based Items

School-Family Connection items 1-8

Student Success items 9-13

Unified, Welcoming School Culture items 14-15

1. I know my child's teachers.
2. I feel comfortable visiting my child's school.
3. I learn about my child from their teachers.
4. I feel comfortable communicating with my child's teacher.
5. I would feel comfortable having my child's teacher visit my home.
6. I feel comfortable partnering with school staff to support my child.
7. I cooperate with teachers to understand my child's behavior.
8. My child's teacher shares what my child is learning with our family.
9. My child participates in afterschool activities such as academic support, sports, or clubs.
10. My child is motivated and engaged in school.
11. My child is meeting attendance expectations.
12. Our family's culture is included in my child's learning.
13. My child is meeting behavior expectations in school.
14. My child's different teachers work together to support my child.
15. The school creates opportunities for students' families to participate in school activities.

4.8 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this CBPAR study was to work with local stakeholders from a Vermont school district involved in the RAFT Project pilot study to identify the constructs necessary to understand the impacts of RAFT implementation through focus groups and cognitive interviews with school administrators, ML teachers, home-school liaisons, and families. We used these three constructs to build a tool known as the TARP. Schools and districts will use data produced by the TARP to inform decisions and policies about allocating resources to sustain the implementation of the RAFT Protocol and ultimately increase the number of trusting partnerships between refugee families and schools. In the first round of focus groups, we found three constructs to be the primary

goals for RAFT administration and participation: 1) School-Family Connection, 2) Student Success, and 3) Unified, Welcoming School Culture. In the initial development, 32 measurable objectives were nested within these objectives to provide a matrix for understanding how to measure these constructs. Eventually, we created two sets of 15 items to measure these objectives, one for each sample population of school-based and family-based participants.

The first step in developing FPPs is cultivating relationships between schools and refugee families. The RAFT protocol was designed to foster relationships between school staff, families, and students. This study contributes to the existing literature that shows the importance of building FPPs, how they support student success, and how creating welcoming cultures improves FPPs (Cureton, 2020; Turney & Kao, 2009). Through this study, I operationalized the implementation of the RAFT Protocol to include the TARP as a measurement tool to support ongoing sustainable RAFT implementation. We created TARP to provide evidence of the impact of using RAFT. This evidence will give schools an understanding of how the RAFT Protocol impacts these three constructs (Student Success, Family School Relationships, and Unified Welcoming School Culture). The TARP allows schools to collect data on how the administration of the RAFT Protocol impacts those relationships. Schools can then use that data to adjust their practice in the classroom and district to create stronger connections with families to support their students equitably.

The first phase of data collection discovered the three main goals that schools and

families had for participating in the RAFT pilot study. These two groups had unique perspectives on their shared goals that motivated their participation, Student success was a clear goal from both perspectives, yet it was evident that families were focused on their student's academic success while the schools had a broader range of what student success meant for them. This parental focus on their children's academic success aligns with Koyama and Bakuza's (2017) research that refugee parents were deeply engaged in their children's academic success. Much of what motivated the school's choice of student participants in the RAFT pilot study was a desire to understand better the backgrounds and motivations of students whose behavior was not meeting the school's expectations after standard interventions proved ineffectual. Therefore, schools hoped that, by improving relationships with students and their families, students' academic experiences would improve. Additionally, they would feel more connected to their teachers and be able to navigate their educational and social communities more successfully.

The goal of developing relationships between teachers and families predicates student success as it creates a greater understanding of student backgrounds, strengths, and needs. All participants in this study felt that developing stronger relationships between families and school professionals would positively impact students' educational experiences. The literature supports this finding and suggests that supporting school-family partnerships allows teachers to provide more culturally competent instruction (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Weine, 2008) and that refugee families want to be

involved in their children's educational experiences to support their children's academic success (Cun, 2020).

A unique finding of this study that looks explicitly at supporting the implementation of the RAFT Protocol, which was developed to strengthen individual relationships between students, teachers, and families, is that the school-based participants, including ML teachers, liaisons, administrators, and classroom teachers felt that developing a welcoming school culture across the district departments was a key goal of ongoing implementation. The scholarship supports this finding, showing that having a well-defined organizational vision creates clarity and collaboration (Haines & Reyes, 2022b; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Smith, 2005) and that a welcoming culture improves FPPs and supports students' educational success (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). The uniqueness of this finding is that the schools themselves saw this broader vision for using the RAFT Protocol not just as an impact on individual students but as a result of cumulative ongoing use of the RAFT Protocol on the school-wide culture and community. They noted that the development of school-family relationships impacted not only the relationships between individual families and school staff but also the relationships between the school staff of different departments engaged in the administration of the RAFT Protocol conversations. They viewed the impact of sharing these experiences to be one of creating a more unified view of valuing relationships with students' families, willingness to reach out through home visits, and regular

communication with families across departmental staff (McKnight et al., 2017; K. B. Wright et al., 2018).

These three constructs can be viewed individually as distinct goals of RAFT implementation or nested within each other as a long-term progression with student success as the ultimate goal (Unified School Culture -> Improved Family School Relationships -> Student Success). It was clear from the conversations with the participants of this study that these two perspectives can also be held concurrently as a methodology of supporting individual student success and ongoing school culture change to support the entire school body.

4.8.1 Limitations

To support these goals without an ongoing research team, our participants developed the TARP to provide data to assess the impact of the RAFT Protocol based on the overarching implementation goals. The participants represented a breadth of district staff yet did not represent all departments or positions from the educational community. Additionally, families were represented only by parents, but due to the study's constraints, no students could participate. Since no students could participate in this study, we developed the TARP to be administered with school-based and family-based participants, but we did not develop a student-specific tool.

4.8.2 Implications for Research

Current ongoing use of the TARP by school districts will include a plan of analysis to understand how the data inform practice at the district and classroom levels.

The benefit will begin slowly as the schools start reimplementing the RAFT Protocol with the TARP; the initial data will help understand individual participant impacts. Ongoing use will provide a wider lens for how the RAFT protocol impacts the broader school body. We designed the TARP to measure the same constructs across participant groups. Therefore, the first analysis stage is to compare participant groups' results. Example comparisons would be between families and all school-based participants from a specific RAFT Protocol administration. This analysis will provide an understanding of the impact of a discreet RAFT Protocol administration. Additionally, a comparative analysis may be done across school-based roles to understand how participants from different departments understand the process of developing partnerships with families. One of the district administrators brought up the fact that as RAFT implementation continues, analysis between different language groups, gender, and grade will begin to paint a clearer picture of the needs of the district as a whole. We expect different groups to respond differently, informing ongoing practice to develop strong, trusting partnerships across the student population.

Future research will include a validation study of the TARP with a larger body of participants to determine the grouping of the items and refine the analysis process and scoring of the tools. Running a factor analysis would allow us to understand if the items that were developed to understand each of the constructs group together appropriately or if there is appropriate discrimination of each item to retain all items included in the final

TARP. Additionally, it would be informative to understand how each item performs across an educational community's different roles and demographics.

4.9 Conclusion

This study has described how I used CBPAR methodologies to work with a group of educational community stakeholders to understand the goals of using the RAFT Protocol and develop a survey tool to evaluate the effectiveness of its administration. Specifically, three primary constructs emerged from the data encompassing the priorities of RAFT administration: Student Success, Family School Relationships, and Unified, Welcoming School Culture. Through the use of focus groups and cognitive interviews, we translated these constructs, which are supported by the literature to be essential in developing FPPs (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Haines & Reyes, 2022a; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Smith, 2005), into a set of 15 items to assess the impact of RAFT administration. Schools and districts will use data produced by the TARP to inform decisions and policies about allocating resources to sustain the implementation of the RAFT Protocol.

Developing FPPs are necessary, not just because they support students, families, and teachers, but also to focus on equity. In light of the increasing numbers of students coming from ML backgrounds and the refugee resettlement program, schools must understand how to develop FPPs with families from other cultures to support the needs of all students. Through developing partnerships with families with a refugee background, schools can provide bridges to cultural expectations and language support and allow

communities to grow around the strengths and needs of the stakeholders. (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016; Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012).

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Table 1

Data Collection Activities and Objectives

Activities	Participants	Objectives
Focus Group #1	PART <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - School Administrators (Norma) • 2 - EL Teachers (Norma and Esther) • 1- Home-school Liaison (Alma) • 1- Family (Najam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the rationale for ongoing RAFT implementation • Discuss themes that emerge regarding their reasoning for implementing RAFT • Discuss what data may be collected to meet the goals of implementation
Focus Group #2	PART <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - School Administrators (Mohsin and Norma) • 2 - EL Teachers (Norma and Esther) • 1- Home-school Liaison (Alma) • 1- Family (Najam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the themes and use example items to develop questions that will provide the district and stakeholders with valuable data. • As a group, develop and refine TARP questions • As a group, determine the most appropriate TARP format and platform • Present validated measures to assess 2-5 constructs identified in the first focus group
Cognitive Interviews	Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - Families (Abdul and Molly) • 3 - Home-School Liaisons (Gurratan, Bobby, Paul) • 1- EL Teachers (Rachel) • 1- General Education Teacher (Laura) • 1 - District Administrator (Mohsin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the understandability of items • Examine the appropriateness of the questions for the audience. • Examine the cultural sensitivity of the content, • Examine the intended goals of the tool • Examine the ability to translate the tool and its use across languages • Examine the ease of use for all participant groups

Focus Group #3	PART	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - School Administrators (Mohsin and Norma) • 2 - EL Teachers (Norma and Esther) • 1- Home-school Liaison (Alma) • 1- Family (Najam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present revised TARP • Discuss any changes to build group consensus or discover divergent priorities. • Finalize TARP for future field-testing • Finalize demographic questions

Table 2

Data Analysis Activities

Activities	Analysis
Focus Group #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record and take field notes• Code meeting transcription• Organize codes into themes• Prepare an analytic report• Create example TARP questions to measure 2-5 constructs identified by the focus group• Identify validated measures based on identified constructs
Focus Group #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record and take field notes• Code meeting transcription• Organize codes into themes• Prepare an analytic report• Use the analytic report to refine TARP questions and format
Cognitive Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transcribe and code interviews• Organize codes into themes• Develop Text summary from themes• Use text summary to make any needed adjustments to TARP questions and format
Focus Group #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code meeting transcription• Organize codes into• Compare themes drawn from the discussion to finalize TARP questions and format for future field-test.

Table 3

Thematic Framework

Construct	Measurable Objective	Codes
School-Family Connection	Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family feels valued • Family understanding of school Environment and Culture • Internal Family Connection from learning from school relationships • Cooperative problem-solving between teachers and families • Relational comfort • Relational Understanding • Family Support • Teacher Home Visits
	School/Teacher communication with family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency of academic progression
	Teacher Family Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Expectations • Family Expectations • Family trust of school/teachers • Teacher Home Visits

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way Connection • Understanding Family Culture/Dynamics
Student Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Academics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Behavior • Student feels valued
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-teacher connection • Cooperative Problem solving • Relational comfort • Relational understanding
Unified Welcoming School Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Effect over time without continued outreach • Next steps after RAFT • RAF • T Implementation • Cooperative Problem Solving
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Practice Change • Teacher to Teacher connection or School culture change • Cooperation between school staff

Table 4

Preliminary Survey Questions

School-Family Connection	Family Engagement	1. I know the names of my child's teachers. 2. I know the names of my student's family. 3. I know what is happening in my child's classes 4. I know how to help my child with schoolwork. 5. How often do I go into the school?
	Family Feels Valued	6. I feel like the school values me. 7. I felt valued or important when the teachers came to my home. 8. I feel like the school/teachers hear my concerns. 9. I felt heard during RAFT 10. During RAFT, I was able to express my feelings 11. My teachers care about my thoughts 12. My child's teachers want to hear from me.
	Family Understanding of School Environment and Culture	13. I know what is happening in my child's classes. 14. I know what my child is learning. 15. I know how to help my child with their school work. 16. My child's teacher tells me about their academic progression. 17. I understand how my child is doing in school. 18. I feel comfortable visiting my child's school.
	Internal family connection	19. I learned something about my child during RAFT 20. I learn things about my child from their teachers. 21. I can support my child's educational success.

Relational Comfort	<p>22. I feel comfortable talking to my student's family.</p> <p>23. I know how to reach out to my students' families.</p> <p>24. I reach out to my students' families for support</p> <p>25. I feel comfortable talking with my child's teachers.</p> <p>26. I feel comfortable going to my child's school.</p>
Relational Understanding	<p>27. I know about my students' home life</p> <p>28. I understand how my student's home life impacts their school days.</p> <p>29. I understand my student's culture</p> <p>30. I know about my students' backgrounds.</p> <p>31. I change how I teach based on my students' backgrounds, strengths, and needs.</p>
School/Teacher-to-Family Communication	<p>32. I communicate directly with my students' families.</p> <p>33. I communicate regularly with my students' families.</p> <p>34. I know how to communicate directly with my refugee students' families.</p> <p>35. It is easy to reach out to students' families.</p> <p>36. I have multiple ways to reach out to families.</p> <p>37. I am able to share honestly about my students' educational experiences.</p> <p>38. I feel comfortable reaching out to families.</p> <p>39. My child's teacher communicates regularly with me.</p> <p>40. My child's teachers tell me about what is going on in school.</p> <p>41. My child's teachers reach out to me.</p>

- 42. My child's teachers offer me opportunities to support my child's education.
- 43. There is ongoing communication from my child's teachers.
- 44. Communication with my child's teachers is helpful.
- 45. My child's teachers tell me about my child's academics.
- 46. I trust my child's teachers.
- 47. I feel comfortable talking to my child's teacher

Student Educational Experience

- 48. My child's work has improved since taking part in RAFT.
- 49. The student's work has improved since taking part in RAFT.
- 50. My child is motivated/engaged in school.
- 51. The Student is motivated/engaged in school.
- 52. My child takes advantage of opportunities at school.
- 53. The student takes advantage of opportunities at school.
- 54. My child feels like they belong at their school.
- 55. My child feels like they are connected to their school.
- 56. My child enjoys school.
- 57. My child is regularly absent from school.
- 58. My child skips school sometimes.
- 59. My child's academics are improving.

Student Support

- 60. My child feels supported at school.
- 61. My child feels important at school.

- 62. My child feels included at school.
- 63. My child feels comfortable at school
- 64. I feel like my child's teachers are focusing on their academics.
- 65. I know my student's family members.
- 66. I know my child's teachers' names.
- 67. I know how to help my child with schoolwork.

Teacher-Family
Relationship

- 68. Teacher home visits are valuable.
- 69. Knowing my students' families is important to my teaching.
- 70. Knowing my child's teacher is important.
- 71. I feel like I know my child's teacher.
- 72. I know my child's teacher's expectations.
- 73. I feel comfortable reaching out to my student's family
- 74. I feel comfortable talking to my student's family.
- 75. I feel comfortable talking to my child's teacher.
- 76. I feel comfortable reaching out to my child's teacher.
- 77. My child's teacher knows who I am.
- 78. I know my student's family members.
- 79. The teacher cares for my family.
- 80. The teacher cares for my student.
- 81. The teacher asks about my life outside of school.
- 82. I have a strong connection with my child's teacher.

		83. My student looks me in the eyes when they talk to me.
	Teacher Home Visits	84. I feel comfortable visiting my students at home. 85. I feel comfortable having my child's teacher visit our home. 86. Visiting my students' homes is a valuable practice. 87. My child's teacher has visited my home. 88. I know what my student's home is like. 89. I would be willing to visit my student's home. 90. I would be willing to have my child's teacher visit our home.
	Two-Way Communication	91. My child's teacher reaches out to talk with me. 92. I reach out to talk to my students' families. 93. My child's teacher lets me know what is going on with my child in school. 94. My student's family lets me know what is going on with my child at home. 95. I let my student's family know about their academic progression. 96. I feel like my child's teacher focuses on my child's academic needs.
	Understanding Family Culture	97. I understand how things work at my student's home. 98. My child's teacher does not understand our culture. 99. I do not understand the school culture. 100. I adjust my teaching practice based on my student's cultural backgrounds.
Student Success	Cooperative Problem Solving	101. I cooperate with families to understand student behavior. 102. I cooperate with my child's teacher to help support them.
	Relational Comfort	103. I feel comfortable talking to my student's families.

	<p>104.I know how to reach out to my student’s families.</p> <p>105.I reach out to my students’ families for support.</p> <p>106.I feel comfortable talking with my child’s teachers.</p> <p>107.I feel comfortable going to my child’s school.</p>
Relational Understanding	<p>108.I know about my students’ home life</p> <p>109.I understand how my student’s home life impacts their school days.</p> <p>110.I understand my student’s culture</p> <p>111.I know about my students’ backgrounds.</p> <p>112.I change how I teach based on my students’ backgrounds, strengths, and needs.</p>
Student Academics	<p>113.Student is motivated</p> <p>114.My student is willing to take chances at school.</p> <p>115.Student tries their best at school.</p> <p>116.Student academics are improving.</p> <p>117.My child’s teacher focuses on their academics.</p> <p>118.My child is academically supported at school.</p> <p>119.I know how to help my child with their school work.</p> <p>120.I know how to help my student succeed academically.</p>
Student behavior	<p>121.Student behavior is improving</p> <p>122.My student is able to meet behavior expectations in school</p> <p>123.Student enjoys school.</p> <p>124.Student participates in class.</p> <p>125.Student participates in afterschool activities such as sports or clubs.</p> <p>126.My student feels like they belong at their school.</p>

		127. Student skips school.
	Student Connection	128. My student feels connected to their classroom teacher. 129. My student feels connected to their ML teacher. 130. My student feels connected to their liaison.
Unified Welcoming School Culture	Teacher Practice Change	131. I partner with ML teachers to support my students. 132. I am comfortable reaching out to refugee families to support my students. 133. I am able to use what I know about a student's home life and culture to inform my teaching practice. 134. What I know about a student's home life allows me to understand their in-school behavior. 135. I want to know more about my student's background 136. What I know about my students' cultures helps me communicate with their families.
	Teacher to Teacher connection or school culture change	137. I feel comfortable working with my ML students. 138. I feel comfortable partnering with ML families. 139. I feel comfortable reaching out to refugee families. 140. I feel comfortable going to my student's home. 141. I prefer to have the liaisons and ML teachers work with ML students. 142. I prefer to have the liaisons or ML teachers communicate with ML families. 143. I know the families of my ML students.

Table 5

Tool to Assess the RAFT Protocol (TARP)

All the information you give us is confidential. Your name will not be attached to any of the information you provide. It is important that you answer as many questions as possible, but please feel free to skip those questions that make you uncomfortable.

Demographics

Student Gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Family's Home Language

- Arabic
- Burmese
- English
- French
- Hindi
- Karen
- Kirundi
- Kizigua
- Mai Mai
- Nepali
- Pashto
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Vietnamese
- Other

Student's Grade

- Pre-K
- Kindergarten
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14

My Role

- Family Member
- Classroom Teacher
- ML Teacher
- Liaison
- Administrator
- Advisor
- Guidance Counselor
- Social Worker
- Behavior Interventionist
- Other School-Based Role _____
- Other Family-Based Role _____

Timing

- Before RAFT
- After RAFT

TARP School-Based Questions

1. I know my student’s family members.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. I regularly share what my student is learning with their family.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. I feel comfortable having my student’s family visit my class
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. I learn about my student from their family.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
5. I feel comfortable communicating with my student's family.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
6. I would feel comfortable visiting my student's home.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
7. I feel comfortable partnering with multilingual families to support my multilingual students.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
8. My student participates in afterschool activities such as academic support, sports, or clubs.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
9. My student is motivated and engaged in school.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
10. My student is meeting attendance expectations.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
11. I differentiate how I teach based on my student's backgrounds, strengths, and needs.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
12. My student is able to meet behavior expectations in school.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
13. I cooperate with families to understand student behavior.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
14. I collaborate with district colleagues to support my multilingual students.						
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
15. The school creates opportunities for students' families to participate in school activities.						

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

TARP Family-Based Questions

1. I know my child's teachers.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. My child's teacher shares what my child is learning with our family.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. I feel comfortable visiting my child's school.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. I learn about my child from their teachers.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5. I feel comfortable communicating with my child's teacher.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. I would feel comfortable having my child's teacher visit my home.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

7. I feel comfortable partnering with school staff to support my child.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

8. My child participates in afterschool activities such as academic support, sports, or clubs.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

9. My child is motivated and engaged in school.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

10. My child is meeting attendance expectations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

11. Our family's culture is included in my child's learning.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

12. My child is meeting behavior expectations in school.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

13. I cooperate with teachers to understand my child's behavior.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

14. My child's different teachers work together to support my child.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

15. The school creates opportunities for students' families to participate in school activities.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

It is essential to understand the original purpose of this dissertation to understand the significance of this research. In this CBPAR study I worked with local stakeholders from a Vermont school district involved in the RAFT Project pilot study (Haines & Reyes, 2022a) to identify the constructs necessary to understand the impacts of RAFT implementation and build a tool to assess those constructs. The PART involved in this study included school administrators, Multilingual-teachers, classroom teachers, home-school liaisons, and families. The PART participated in a set of focus groups, where they developed an understanding of the goals of RAFT implantation and developed preliminary survey items to measure the impact of RAFT on those goals. A second set of stakeholders participated in cognitive interviews to review and refine the survey items. Finally, the PART met again in a focus group to finalize the survey questions and structure of the tool. The survey was named the TARP and contained three constructs measured by 15 items. Schools and districts will use the data from the TARP to make decisions on how to allocate resources to sustain ongoing implementation of the RAFT Protocol and thereby adjust practice and policy in the classroom and district to create stronger connections with families to support their students.

5.1 Scholarly and Practical Implications

The US Government has called for the development of FPPs in both IDEA and ESSA, making a specific provision for students coming from historically marginalized backgrounds, including students with limited English proficiency and from any racial or

ethnic minority background (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 1975, ESSA, 2015). However, these laws did not articulate how to develop FPPs; therefore, schools often do not know how to implement this policy effectively or even what FPPs should look like (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Dunst, 2000; Haines et al., 2021; Mandarakas, 2014; Turnbull et al., 2009). In light of this confusion, the literature continues to show that FPPs benefit students, families, and teachers (Turnbull et al., 2022). The literature has demonstrated that FPPs improve student academic and social outcomes (Turnbull et al., 2006), families experience less stress when they have FPPs with their children's educators (Burke & Hodapp, 2014), and school systems that prioritize a culture of collaborative FPPs increase internal support for teachers building FPPs (Haines & Reyes, 2022b). The first step in developing partnerships is to forge relationships between families and school professionals.

This dissertation made a practical contribution to the existing literature by outlining an operationalized plan to develop relationships between families with a refugee background and school staff. In this study, the RAFT Protocol (Haines & Reyes, 2022b) brought together students, families, and school staff to have a student-centered conversation to catalyze relationships. The TARP is used as a pre- and post-assessment to understand the impact of RAFT on families and school staff. We based TARP items on the school district's goals for participating in the RAFT Project Pilot study. Through the use of the TARP, schools will have a data-based understanding of how using the RAFT Protocol conversation impacted relationships between participating families and school

staff. This data will give schools an account of how the RAFT Protocol affects the three main goals of RAFT usage and allow them to use that data to inform decisions on the continued implementation of the RAFT Protocol.

Many studies have provided frameworks for understanding what FPPs look like and how to facilitate their development (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Haines et al., 2017; Turnbull et al., 2009). The extant literature contains a variety of measures of relationships between school staff and families. Summers et al.'s Family Professional Partnership Scale (2005) looked specifically at measuring FPPs with families with children with disabilities. Majerus built the Parent-Teacher Relationship Survey (2011) to examine parents' perceptions of their children's classroom teacher. Salinas et al. 's (2019) Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships was an annual evaluation to monitor schools' efforts to involve all families. Others suggest that each school or district evaluate its site-specific partnership programs (Sheridan & Kim, 2016b).

In this study, I responded to Haines et al.'s (2017) "Call to Action" to operationalize the development of FPPs through the development of a tool to assess the impact of the RAFT Protocol (Haines & Reyes, 2022b). Unlike other measures of relationships between school staff and families, we built this measure to directly examine the impact of an intervention dedicated to facilitating relationships between school staff and families from a refugee background. Through the operationalization of an intervention with an evaluative assessment, I bridge the gap in the literature to provide a single method to operationalize and sustain building relationships between staff and

families with the RAFT Protocol so that schools can use TARP data to inform their use of resources and have a sustainable model of implementation, rather than just the lived experiences of the participants. RAFT's continued use will require a decision on how to use district resources, so it is crucial to understand its costs and benefits. The TARP allows school districts to know the advantages and therefore make data-based decisions to allocate resources to build relationships with refugee families. In addition to fostering student success, this will ensure equitable access through relationships to cultural expectations and affect parent-teacher power dynamics and implicit bias through ongoing relationships with families (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016; Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012).

5.2 Research

Using Mandinach et al.'s (2006) Framework for Data-Driven Decision Making to consider how schools make decisions, schools need to document the impact of an intervention with data that they can translate into knowledge used to make decisions. To create successful systems change, leaders and decision-makers must regularly receive information about the impacts of interventions (Fixsen et al., 2013). The TARP is the final product of this dissertation, designed to increase and sustain the implementation of the RAFT Protocol. The RAFT Protocol, despite positive results in its pilot study, has only been completed with 12 families and thus is not yet an evidence-based design. In order for the RAFT Protocol to be considered an effective catalyst for forming relationships between refugees and teachers, it must be fully evaluated before and after its

implementation. When used in conjunction with the RAFT Protocol, the TARP will provide data that can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the RAFT Protocol in developing relationships between schools and families. We designed the TARP in its current form to measure the intended impacts of RAFT administration. TARP has demonstrated face validity through a rigorous process of item development with the PARENT through focus groups and cognitive interviews. To establish TARP as a validated tool, it is essential to conduct a validation study with a more extensive and diverse sample than was used in the development phase. The sample population should represent a broader range of families, cultures, roles, genders, ages, and home languages of students and school staff.

In the next step of validating the TARP, other validated tools will be used to measure the same constructs as the TARP to provide concurrent validity. Concurrent validity refers to how what is measured relates directly to other validated measures of the same construct (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). TARP constructs must demonstrate internal reliability across items to achieve this objective. To examine this, the TARP will undergo a field study with at least 75 participants from both family and school-based populations, representing a minimum of five participants per item (Bentler et al., 1976). In the field study, the factor structure of the TARP will be examined using a confirmatory factor analysis. This is to confirm that they are aligned with the three constructs of TARP development.

Factors are groups of items that measure the same latent construct. Alternatively, I would conduct an exploratory factor analysis to determine the latent variable factor structure if factors are not confirmed. The number of factors extracted would be determined by (a) eigenvalues above 1.0, (b) scree plot analysis, and (c) construct interpretability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006; Wang et al., 2003). Once the factors or constructs have been determined and the items linked to the constructs, the correlation coefficient would be measured to show concurrent validity between the TARP and the validated measures assessing the same constructs. In this field study, I would use Gruenert's (1998) School Culture Survey as a validated school culture scale and Summers et al.'s (2005) Family Professional Partnership Scale as a validated scale measuring School-Family Relationships. Currently, there is no measure of teacher or parent perception of student success in the literature, so a test of internal consistency, such as Cronbach's Alpha, will be conducted to determine this factor's validity. After I have determined the factor structure and internal consistency, the TARP will be revised based on the information gathered from the factor analysis. If significant changes are necessary, a secondary field test and factor analysis would be required to address the impact of the edits.

Considering that there is scant scholarship regarding how assessing educational interventions impacts ongoing sustainability, an implementation-science-based study may provide an understanding of how using the TARP affects the RAFT Protocol's ongoing use. The results of this study will provide more robust evidence to allow us to make

claims about the utility of this tool for increasing the sustainability of the RAFT Protocol and how providing data for understanding outcomes can affect its ongoing implementation.

5.3 Policy and Practice

Data from the TARP may provide valuable insight into the ongoing use of the RAFT Protocol at the district and school levels. Based on the impact of the RAFT implementation from the TARP data, schools may choose to implement RAFT in broad or targeted designs. Examples include using the RAFT Protocol as a mandatory procedure during the intake process of all students with a refugee background, providing access to the RAFT intervention for all enrolled ML students on an annual basis, or even making it available for any student transferring into the district from any language or cultural background.

Currently, the state of Vermont offers a family-engagement toolkit as a part of its systematic improvement plan (Vermont Agency of Education, 2019). This toolkit provides options for engaging families to support students identified with an emotional disturbance in grades 3, 4, and 5. This toolkit is offered to schools to support those students and improve their math proficiency. Through the systematic use of the RAFT Protocol and the TARP, school districts may seek to use these new data points to reflect their advocacy of family partnerships at the state level. Through this policy advocacy, the RAFT Protocol could become a statewide policy to improve FPPs across all school districts.

5.4 Limitations

Throughout this study, I was limited by the real-world circumstances that affected the participants. This dissertation took place in the year following the COVID-19 Pandemic and during a district-wide remodel of school facilities. As a result of these circumstances, the teacher population in the participating district was far more fatigued than during a typical school year. This made it challenging to obtain participation from a broader range of participants. It would have been desirable for the PART and the stakeholders I interviewed to have a more extensive participation base. For example, I could not recruit any classroom teachers to participate in the focus groups. The only classroom teacher involved in the RAFT Project pilot study had retired by this time, and after repeated attempts at recruiting volunteers, no other classroom teachers agreed to participate in the focus group. Having a classroom teacher participate greatly enhanced the cognitive interviews, as her perspective contributed to invaluable insights into the items.

Only one family member was able to participate in the focus groups. Consequently, this parent was representative of all families during the establishment of the constructs and the development of items. Due to the context of the study, she represented not only all families but also all cultures represented within those families. It would have been advantageous to have a broader range of experiences from the families' point of view so that their perceptions and cultures could be expressed.

A further limitation was the time since the RAFT Project Pilot study. The availability of participants who participated in the pilot study decreased after three years, and their memories of their initial experiences faded. Due to this time-lapse, it was challenging to gather data initially, as focus groups had difficulty gaining traction, and explaining the purpose of cognitive interviews to family members who had not engaged with the RAFT Protocol for over three years was more challenging.

The study was also limited because I conducted it within a single school district. Consequently, it represents the experiences and culture of this particular organization. In the future, it will be valuable to conduct a field study across school districts with a larger sample size to understand how the items perform and whether the constructs of the TARP adequately address the needs of other school districts as they seek to develop relationships with their multilingual families.

5.5 Conclusion

Schools and districts will use the data collected by the TARP to inform their decisions and policies regarding the allocation of resources to support the implementation of the RAFT protocol. In this study, I have described how I used CBPAR methodologies to work with a group of educational community stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the RAFT Protocol and develop a survey tool to evaluate it. Specifically, three primary constructs emerged from the data encompassing the priorities of RAFT administration: Student Success, Family School Relationships, and Unified, Welcoming School Culture. We used focus groups and cognitive interviews to translate these constructs, which have

been found to be essential to the development of FPPs (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Haines & Reyes, 2022a; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Smith, 2005) into a group of 15 items intended to evaluate the impact of RAFT administration.

In order to improve equitable access for families from refugee backgrounds, district policies need to focus on developing FPPs that support students, families, and teachers. In light of the increasing numbers of students coming from multilingual backgrounds and the refugee resettlement program, it is critical for schools to understand how to establish relationships with families from other cultures to support the needs of their students. Through developing partnerships with families from a refugee background, schools can provide bridges to cultural expectations and language support. This will allow communities to build around the strengths and needs of stakeholders. (Beneke & Cheatham, 2016; Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012).

Developing FPPs begins with cultivating relationships between schools and refugee families. The RAFT protocol fosters relationships between school staff, families, and students. The TARP allows schools to collect data on how the administration of the RAFT Protocol impacts those relationships. This study contributes to the existing literature that shows the importance of building FPPs, how they support student success, and how creating welcoming cultures improves FPPs (Cureton, 2020; Turney & Kao, 2009). Through this study, I operationalize the implementation of the RAFT Protocol by incorporating the TARP as a measurement tool to support ongoing implementation. We created this measurement to provide evidence of the impact of using the RAFT Protocol.

This evidence will give schools an understanding of how the RAFT Protocol impacts these three constructs (Student Success, Family School Relationships, and Unified Welcoming School Culture). Schools will then be able to use that data to support ongoing RAFT Protocol implementation and adjust their practice in the classroom and district to create stronger connections with families to equitably support their students and families with a refugee background.

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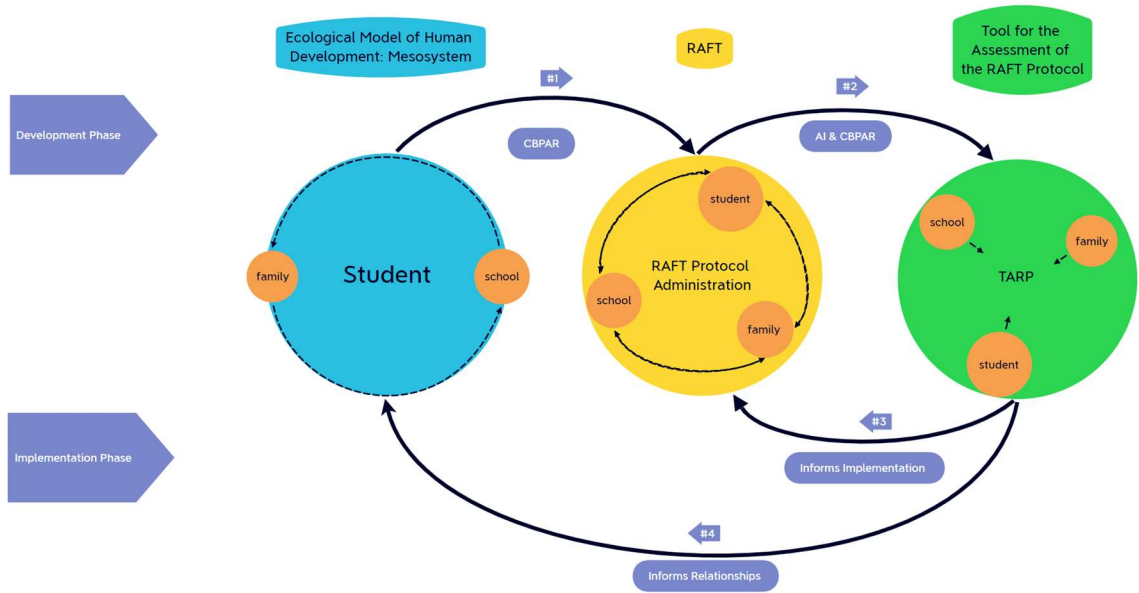
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7. APPENDICES

7.1 Conceptual Framework



7.2 Data Collection and Analysis Summary

Activities	Participants	Objectives	Analysis
Focus Group #1	PART <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - School Administrators (Norma) • 2 - EL Teachers (Norma and Esther) • 1- Home-school Liaison (Alma) • 1- Family (Najam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine rationale for ongoing RAFT implementation. • Discuss themes that emerge regarding their rationale for implementing RAFT. • Discuss what data may be collected to meet the goals of implementation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record and take field notes 2. Code meeting transcription 3. Organize codes into themes 4. Prepare analytic report 5. Create example TARP questions to measure 2-5 constructs identified by the focus group 6. Identify validated measures based on identified constructs
Focus Group #2	PART <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - School Administrators (Mohsin and Norma) • 2 - EL Teachers (Norma and Esther) • 1- Home-school Liaison (Alma) • 1- Family (Najam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the themes and use example items as a starting block for developing questions that will provide the district and stakeholders with valuable data. • As a group develop and refine TARP questions • As a group determine most appropriate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record and take field notes 2. Code meeting transcription 3. Organize codes into themes 4. Prepare analytic report 5. Use analytic report to refine TARP questions and format

			TARP format and platform
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present validated measures to assess 2-5 constructs identified in the first focus group. 	
Stakeholder cognitive interviews	Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - Families (Abdul and Molly) • 3 - Home-School Liaisons (Gurratan, Bobby, Paul) • 1- EL Teachers (Rachel) • 1- General Education Teacher (Laura) • 1 - District Administrator (Mohsin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the understandability of items • Examine the appropriateness of the questions for the audience. • Examine the cultural sensitivity of the content, • Examine the intended goals of the tool • Examine the ability to translate the tool and its use across languages • Examine the ease of use for all participant groups 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcribe and code interviews 2. Organize codes into themes 3. Develop Text summary from themes 4. Use text summary to make any needed adjustments to TARP questions and format
Focus Group #3	PART <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - School Administrators (Mohsin and Norma) • 2 - EL Teachers (Norma and Esther) • 1- Home-school Liaison (Alma) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present revised TARP • Discuss any changes to build group consensus, or discover divergent priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code meeting transcription • Organize codes into themes • Compare themes drawn from the discussion to finalize TARP questions and

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1- Family (Najam)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize TARP for future field-testing• Finalize demographic questions	format for future field-test.
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7.3 Focus Group #1 Questioning Route

Welcome to our first of three focus groups. I have asked you all here as a research team to help me understand your perspectives and opinions of what is important about how and why we use the RAFT Protocol. I will be asking a series of 8 questions. I am estimating that we will be together for 1 hour today. Let's begin by all answering the following prompt or question:

1. Please share your name, and how long you have either lived here or have worked in this school.
2. And how did you learn about RAFT?
3. Based on what you know, from experience or from what you have heard about RAFT, what do you think is most valuable about using the RAFT Protocol?
4. What are you hoping RAFT helps you or your school or district achieve?

Probes (If necessary): Some examples might be that you want to understanding how RAFT impacts:

Family-to-school relationships

Family to school trust

Student-to-teacher relationships

Student to teacher trust

Family to liaison relationship

School knowledge about family

School knowledge about student

For the next two questions I am going to ask you to answer for the group you represent.

For example I will ask _____ to answer the question as a teacher.

5. What do you think is the most beneficial outcome of RAFT for _____ participants?

Students answer for students etc.

Families

Home-school liaisons

EL-teachers

Gen-ed teachers

Administrators

6. What do you hope to learn from a TARP report

Students

Families

Liaisons

EL teachers

Gen ed teachers

Administrators

7. If you had a chance to give us any advice as we are making a tool to assess the outcomes of using the RAFT protocol, what would it be?
8. We want you to be a part of this process and make sure that your voice is heard throughout the planning and building of the TARP, is there anything that we missed that we should have talked about but didn't?

7.4 Focus Group #2 Questioning Route

1. How are you going to use the information you collect?
2. Should the feedback be quantitative (numerical scale), or qualitative (open-ended response), or a mixture?
3. Do you have any implementation questions/suggestions?
4. When should the TARP be administered

Before and after

Only after

Same day as RAFT

One week after RAFT

Two weeks after RAFT

One month after RAFT

5. Do you think the TARP should be online or a paper form?
6. How much time do you think would be appropriate to complete the TARP?

2-5 min

5-10 min

10-15 min

15-30 min

7. What is a good length for a questionnaire?

3-5 items (1-5)

5-7 items (6-10)

7-10 items (11-15)

8. Do you think that items should be open-ended, Likert scale, multiple-choice, or a mixture?

Open ended

Likert

Multiple choice

A mixture of all

What type of results report will be useful for you?

As a School

As a student or Family

9. If you had a chance to give us any advice as we are making a tool to assess the outcomes of using the RAFT protocol, what would it be?
10. We want you to be a part of this process and make sure that your voice is heard throughout the planning and building of the TARP. Is there anything that we missed that we should have talked about but didn't?

7.5 Cognitive Interview Protocol

Thank you for coming here today to help us out. The reason we asked for your help is that we are creating a survey to help families and schools understand the impact of using the RAFT Protocol. Today I am going to ask you to look at questions that are being considered for possible use in the RAFT survey. Your reactions to these forms will provide us with information that will help make the form as easy to complete as possible. Okay?

Hand Respondent Confidentiality Form

The first thing I need to do is to ask you to read and sign this consent form. But first let me explain what it is about. This interview is voluntary. It is being conducted by me for use in my work at UVM and for the schools that are developing this survey. Everything you say or write is confidential. The only people who can see the information you provide are employees of UVM or myself. We have been sworn by the Internal Review Board to keep individual answers confidential, and we can be fined if we reveal peoples' specific answers in any way that makes the person identifiable. The statement we are asking you to sign indicates that you have volunteered for this interview. I will also sign it as well since I am the person conducting the interview and I want to assure you in writing of my promise to keep all of your information confidential.

Explain Procedure

In a couple of minutes, I am going to give you a computer with an online survey. When I do, I would like you to talk out loud about your reactions to the survey as you

read questions and fill it out. I would like to know everything you think about it. Talking out loud about these sorts of things may seem a little unusual, so before I give you the computer, I have a really short practice exercise. When I give it to you, please tell me everything you are thinking as you look at the questions. I would like to know any thoughts you have about whether it strikes you in a favorable or unfavorable way, whether it is clear about what to do or not do, and so forth.

Hand out Respondent Practice Questions

How many siblings do you have?

_____ Number of siblings

How many windows are in your home?

_____ Number of windows

Okay, please read the questions out loud and tell me everything you are thinking about while you fill it out.

(Provide positive reinforcement, e.g., “Good, that’s what we need to know.”)

(Encourage the respondent to provide other information, e.g., “When you fill out the real survey form just be sure that you tell us about your reactions to everything, the format, the way the whole thing looks, whether it’s clear what to do or not do, anything you don’t understand, or anything that seems strange.”)

Provide Computer Survey to Participant

Now here is the survey that might arrive in your email. Please take your time and tell me any reactions you have to everything that you see in front of you. (Note: If person is

responding for someone else, e.g., as a translator, mark here and make sure respondent understands our expectations.)

1. Any reactions to the email subject:

2. Did respondent read the instructions?

Fully Partially Not at all

3. Did respondent react at all to the opportunity to use the tool electronically vs. by paper? If so, how?

Ask Respondent to Fill Out the survey

Now, please fill out the survey form and talk out loud about your impressions of it. We would like for you to read whatever you would read at home while filling it out; however, if there is anything you wouldn't read, don't read it here. We'd like for you to fill it out just like you would at home, except that you should talk out loud about it, and anything you read to yourself should be read out loud. Please go ahead.

Probes that might be used: ·

What are you thinking right now? ·

Remember to read or think aloud for me—it's up to you what you read, but whatever you decide to read please do aloud so I know what you are looking at or thinking. ·

Can you tell me more about that? ·

Could you describe that for me? ·

Don't forget to tell me what you are thinking as you do that.

Record Relevant Comments, Errors, Hesitations, and Other Indicators of Potential Problems During Completion (to be used to frame follow-up questions).

3. Did respondent read the instructions?

Fully

Partially

Skimmed

Not at all

4. Any reactions/hesitations/questions to the instructions?

Debriefing Questions

Overall, how easy or difficult was the form to complete?

Very easy

Somewhat easy

Somewhat difficult

Very difficult

Was there anything unclear or confusing about how to fill out this survey?

Yes → (If yes) please explain:

No

(as modified from Dillman et al., 2014, p. 245-247)

7.6 Focus Group #3 Questioning Route

- 1) Overview Discussion
 - a) Three Main Goals for RAFT Implementation
 - School Family Connection
 - Student Success
 - United School Culture – primarily measured through cross-role analysis
 - Suggestions/Edits?
- 2) Survey Presentation and Feedback Discussion
 - a) Family Based Items
 - b) School Based Items
- 3) Implementation Questions
 - a) Pre RAFT timing – shortly before RAFT
 - b) Post RAFT timing – 3 months or end of semester
 - c) RAFT Participation
 - i) What students?
 - ii) What Staff/Faculty?
 - iii) Community Members?
 - iv) Format Questions
- 4) Analysis Strategies
- 5) Comparing across Roles
 - a) Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, Behavior interventionist
 - b) Comparing Family to School
 - c) Comparing across Language
 - d) Comparing across grades
 - e) Comparing across gender
- 6) Ongoing action/Goal setting/What next?
- 7) Ongoing action:

Future Research Suggestions:

- (1) Have all incoming newcomers and their associated school staff and faculty participate in RAFT and use TARP before and after.

8) Ongoing action:

How do you as a school want to use this tool to help setting up ongoing action to improve family school connection, Unified school culture, and improve student success?