

*Original Paper*

## Parents' Ideas about Good Parenting: Narratives of First- and Second-Generation Hmong Parents

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### **Abstract**

*Parenting ideas and practices are highly influenced by culture. However, when parents move to another country, their parenting ideologies and practices are often questioned by their children and the larger society. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the concept of good parents and its origins from two generation Hmong parents. Twenty-one parents (9 first-generation and 12 second-generation) from a midwestern state in the United States (14 mothers and 7 fathers), ages ranging from 19 to 50 (mean=31.57, SD=8.29), participated in the study. Results show that good parents provide for their children's basic needs, are involved in their children's daily lives, communicate with their children without yelling, discipline their children with age-appropriate techniques, and teach their children to be responsible and independent. Additionally, we also found that parents learn about parenting from their family members instead of professionals. Suggestions for parent education and future studies are discussed.*

### **Keywords**

*Ideas of good parents, immigrant parenting, Hmong parents, Asian American parenting, acculturation and parenting*

## 1. Introduction

Understanding parents' ideas about good parenting, where they acquire these ideas from, and how these ideas change overtime are critical to working with immigrant families. Immigrants refer to individuals who were born abroad or "born in a country other than their current country of residence" (Gimeno-Feliu et al., 2019, p. 2). In the United States (U.S.), 13.7% of the population (or 44.8 million people) are immigrants or foreign-born, and 28% of the 44.8 million immigrants were from Asia (Budiman, 2020). Immigrant parents usually come with diverse cultural customs and parenting ideas that are different from native-born U.S. parents (Gassman-Pines & Skinner, 2018; Salami et al., 2020; Van Hook & Glick, 2020). Once in the country of destination, some of their cultural customs and parenting practices tend to be viewed as inappropriate (Salami et al., 2020). As such, they are more likely to be questioned by others and their "Americanized" children about their parenting roles and disciplinary approaches (Miao et al., 2018; Salami et al., 2017). Consequently, some immigrant parents experience frustration and eventually suffer frequent parent-child conflict due to the differing ideas about what is acceptable in disciplining children in the U.S. (Leyendecker et al., 2018; Salami et al., 2017). Given the important role parents have on their children's development (Ong et al., 2018), understanding parents' perceptions of what constitutes a "good" parent in the context of acculturation is vital to working with immigrant parents (Hou et al., 2018), especially smaller immigrant groups such as the Hmong from Asia (Vang, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand Hmong parents' perceptions of what constitutes a good parent and where parents acquire their parenting ideas from across two generations of parents. Specifically, our research questions included: (a) What constitutes a "good" parent from different generations of parents? (b) How have these characteristics or parental roles and responsibilities changed overtime? (c) Where did parents learn these parental roles and responsibilities from?

### 1.1 *The Idea of a Good Parent*

The research on parenting has been well-documented in the literature across the international community (Guo, 2021; He et al., 2021; Merzlyakova, 2019). In general, research shows that what constitutes a good parent usually depends on the parent's cultural background, ideologies, and socioeconomic status (Bornstein, 2012; Cheah et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2023). Since immigrant parents come to the country of destination with unique cultural values, beliefs, parenting ideas, and parenting practices (Salami et al., 2020), they have a unique challenge in trying to reconcile how they were parented in their own culture with the different expectations in their new country. For example, research in the U.S. suggests that good parents are expected to balance between love and limits and responsiveness and control (Baumrind, 1989; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019; Smetana, 2017). They are expected to be reliable, structured, involved in children's lives, and discipline consistently using reasoning and alternatives to physical punishment (Cricchio et al., 2019; Pedersen, 2012). Additionally, parents should provide for their children with good nutrition, educational resources, and a safe and

friendly environment that foster physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional growth (Gleason & Narvaez, 2019; Hubert & Aujoulat, 2018; Kahraman et al., 2017). They spend their leisure time with their children, respect their children's needs, promote children's independent thinking abilities, and encourage children to reason and voice their opinions (Dermott & Pomati, 2015; Kalil & Ryan, 2020; Lareau, 2002). Conversely, studies in other cultures and immigrant groups in the U.S. that examined what constitutes a good parent suggest that good parents are supposed to train, govern, and discipline their children (Cricchio et al., 2019; Otto, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). They are also expected to provide for their children's physical needs, such as nutrition, clothing, and cleanliness, and protect them from harm (Boruszak-Kiziukiewicz & Kmita, 2020; Xiong et al., 2005; Yoon et al., 2021). As such, children are expected to be obedient, pay deference to parents, and are obligated to carry out chores in the family. Thus, applying harsh verbal discipline (i.e., yelling and scolding) with physical punishment towards children and getting children to respect parents and the elders are ideal (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Salami et al., 2017). Although these findings are insightful, little is known about how these parenting ideas change overtime within the Hmong immigrant group in the U.S.

### *1.2 Sources of Parenting Ideas*

Parenting ideas, especially ideas about what constitutes a good parent or a bad parent, tend to be learned from a variety of sources. Research shows that most parents tend to receive information about parenting ideas and parenting practices from family members, especially from their mothers, mothers-in-law, grandparents (Berkule-Silberman et al., 2010; Rudi et al., 2018), and friends or other acquaintances (Radey & Randolph, 2009). Berkule-Silberman et al. (2010) analyzed longitudinal data with Latina mothers and found that grandmothers, other family members, along with books, ranked among the top three sources of parenting information. Similarly, Criss et al. (2015) conducted 7 focus groups with 49 Hispanic pregnant women and mothers and found that participants preferred family members, such as the mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, and sister, over healthcare providers for information about pregnancy and children. In addition to family and friends, sources such as parenting classes, books, magazines, television, radio shows, newspapers, and Internet sites have also been found to be reported by parents (Radey & Randolph, 2009).

Studies also found that parents' demographic characteristics also play an important role in where parents received their parenting information (Bornstein, 2012; Radey & Randolph, 2009). For instance, some studies found that low-income mothers in the U.S. are more likely to seek parenting advice and knowledge from immediate family members, friends, and print media (Berkule-Silberman et al., 2010), compared to college educated, middle-class mothers who tend to use friends, teachers, parenting classes, books, and the Internet for parenting information (Bornstein, 2012; Radey & Randolph, 2009; Rowe et al., 2016). Other literatures also suggest that younger parents (Radey & Randolph, 2009) and parents who are fluent in English and with a college education tend to use multiple sources to find parenting information (Rudi et al., 2018; Vally & Hichami, 2019). Despite this robust literature, little is

known about immigrant groups that face significant poverty issues and acculturative stress in the U.S., such as the Hmong (Pfeifer et al., 2012; Vang, 2021).

### *1.3 Acculturation and Parenting*

Acculturation is the process of change in an individual's values, attitudes, and behaviors due to a prolonged contact with multiple cultures (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Although the research on acculturation and parenting is vast (Gonzalez & Méndez-Pounds, 2018; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011; Yu et al., 2016), the results are mixed. Some research suggests a positive relationship between acculturation and parental values, beliefs, or parenting styles (Huang & Lamb, 2014; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011; Yu et al., 2016), while others found no relationship at all (Costigan & Su, 2008; Chuang & Su, 2009). For example, Tajima and Harachi (2010) examined parenting and acculturation in first generation immigrant Vietnamese and Cambodian parents and found that acculturation was related to parenting beliefs only for Vietnamese parents, but not for Cambodian parents who placed higher importance in child obedience with greater acculturation levels. Conversely, Yagmurlu and Sanson (2009) studied Turkish immigrant mothers' parental goals and found that Turkish immigrant mothers in the integration group (or those who preferred both Turkish and Australian cultures) scored significantly lower on the obedience demanding item and higher on the self-direction item, compared to immigrant Turkish mothers in the separated group (or those who preferred Turkish culture only). Other studies with second-generation Hmong also found parenting practices to align well with characteristics of parenting styles advocated in the U.S. (Juang & Meschke, 2017; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Supple & Small, 2006; Xiong et al., 2005). However, most of these studies only included adolescents and college students in their samples without the parents' perspectives.

### *1.4 Hmong Culture and Parenting*

The Hmong are a small, "invisible" Asian American group who came to the U.S. in the mid-1970s as political refugees due to the "secret war" in Laos (Vang, 2021). Although most Hmong in America were from Laos (Note 1), their ancestors originated from China during the late 1800s (G. Y. Lee, 2005). As such, many of the Hmong cultural values, especially those that are related to childrearing, tend to be influenced by the Chinese, particularly by Confucianism (Shek & Sun, 2014). For example, traditionally, Hmong culture stresses the importance of hierarchical relationships (Small et al., 2006), duties and obligations to the family (Moua & Lamborn, 2010), harmony within and across families and/or clans, and the family name (Baird & Vue, 2017). Thus, parenting in the past tended to be based on a hierarchical relationship where children were expected to obey and listen to parents without questioning their authority. Parent-child communication was more likely to be based on a top-down approach where parents lectured and scolded while the child listened (Meschke & Juang, 2014).

Parents were tasked with the responsibility to provide for and protect children from harm and train children to be a “good” person. Specifically, daughters were taught to take on the role of a daughter-in-law, while sons were expected to be educated and contribute to the family and community (Lee et al., 2006). Since obedience and responsibility were stressed in the past, harsh parenting in the forms of scolding, lecturing, and spanking tended to be used (Kaiser, 2004). Coupled with the influence of Confucianism, Hmong parents also experienced a long history of poverty and a lack of formal education (G. Y. Lee, 2005). As such, Hmong parents also set high expectations for their children’s educational outcomes and tended to be stricter with their children’s homework and extracurricular activities (Moua & Lamborn, 2010).

After living in the U.S. for more than four decades (Vang, 2021), some research suggests that Hmong parents’ ideas about parenting and the day-to-day parental roles and responsibilities have been shifting to some extent (Juang & Meschke, 2017; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Supple & Small, 2006; Xiong et al., 2005), partly due to acculturation. For example, Lamborn et al. (2013) conducted a study to examine Hmong parenting practices based on the adolescents’ perceptions and found parents to be more engaging, communicable, and democratic in their parenting strategies, compared to what has been portrayed in the past (Kaiser, 2004). Similarly, Supple and Small (2006) who also studied Hmong American adolescents found Hmong parents to be more democratic in decision making, supportive, and knowledgeable about the adolescents’ activities. Likewise, Xiong and associates’ (2005) qualitative study with Hmong adolescents and parents also revealed that both generations perceived “good” parents to communicate to children without yelling or criticizing, demonstrate an understanding of children’s situations, and monitor children’s day-to-day activities. However, none of these studies examine the idea of good parenting across generations and gender to understand which ideas remain the same and which ideas are shifting due to acculturation.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1 Participants*

Twenty-five self-identified Hmong parents were interviewed. However, after the completion of the study, one participant’s data was discarded because it did not meet the research’s criteria. Additionally, two interviews were incomplete due to equipment failure during the interview and one participant ended the interview after the first five minutes. As such, the final sample consisted of 21 parents, 14 mothers and 7 fathers, ages ranging from 19 to 50 (mean=31.57, SD=8.29). Using Portes and Zhou’s (1993) definition of generational status, first-generation were foreign-born children who immigrated to the U.S. as adults and second-generation immigrants were either born in the U.S. or arrived in the U.S. before age 12. Participants who immigrated between 12 and 18 years old were categorized as the 1.5 generation. Five of the participants were classified as the first-generation, four were classified as the 1.5-generation, and twelve participants met the definition for the second-generation (see Table 1 for

more detail). Of the twelve second-generation parents, eight (67%) were born in the U.S. Most of the participants (86%) were married (n=18) at the time of the study and had an average of 3.71 children, ages ranged from 1 to 32 years old. Most of the participants have a college education (n=14) and can speak English quite well (mean=3.29, SD=2.67, where 1=not at all to 4=very well).

### *2.2 Procedure*

Participants were recruited from several institutions that serve the Hmong community in Minnesota, USA (i.e., public charter schools and non-profit organizations). Minnesota is home to the second largest Hmong population in the U.S. and the city of Saint Paul where we recruited our participants has the largest Hmong population in the state (Budiman, 2020; Pfeifer et al., 2012). Prior to the recruitment, the principal researcher volunteered in one of the non-profit organizations and a public charter school that offered adult basic education and an after-school program for several weeks to be visible to parents and connected to members of the Hmong community. A bilingual flier in Hmong and English was created and posted in various organizations and public charter schools asking eligible parents to sign-up to participate in the study. To be eligible, participants must have a child under the age of 18 living at home at the time of the study and be identified as a Hmong descent. Thirty-seven parents signed up for the study. However, after the initial phone contact to explain more about the study and what participants were expected to complete, twelve participants declined to participate due to “scheduling conflict”; only twenty-five parents agreed to be interviewed.

### *2.3 Interviews*

All interviews were conducted by three trained interviewers: two Hmong descent and one non-Hmong graduate student. The interviews took place in conference rooms at the two non-profit organizations or at the participants' homes and/or coffee shops (i.e., Starbucks and Caribou Coffee). All interviews were conducted in English or in a mixture of Hmong and English and lasted approximately one hour (range=5-90 minutes). Each interview consisted of two parts. The first part involved collecting demographic information from the participants, and the second part was the semi-structured interview. Sample of the semi-structured interview questions included: “In your opinion, what is a good mother/father?” “How do you know if someone is a good mother/father?” “What do good mothers/fathers do that are unique and distinctive from other parents?” “How does s/he interact with his/her children?” “Where did you learn the idea of a good mother/father from?” All interviews were audio recorded for later analysis. After the interview, participants were compensated \$20 for participating.

### *2.4 Translation and Transcription*

The research team consisted of six undergraduate students and the principal researcher who were involved in the transcription process. Of the six undergraduate students, five were fluent in both Hmong and English and one was fluent in English only. To check for the accuracy of the simultaneous translated transcripts, a seventh undergraduate student, who was not involved in the study and

translation, was asked to transcribe 20% of the interviews to check for the reliability and quality of the translated transcripts. Cross reference of the original interview and the second transcription of the interview showed a 90% match.

**Table 1. Demographics of Study Participants (N=21)**

Pseudonym	Generation	Age	Sex	Education	Employment Status	Marital Status	Number of Children	Age of First Child
Yer	2	29	Female	H.S. Graduate	No	Divorced	3	13
Kongmeng	2	27	Male	BA/BS degree	Yes	Married	3	12
Zongkhang	2	28	Male	Some college	Yes	Married	4	9
Xee	2	27	Female	Some college	Yes	Married	4	9
Yer	2	34	Female	Some college	Yes	Divorced	3	18
Kaj	2	24	Female	BA/BS degree	Yes	Married	1	1
Nou	2	32	Female	MA degree or higher	Yes	Married	3	14
Kiab	2	32	Female	Some college	Yes	Married	2	11
Sua	1	34	Female	NA	NA	Married	4	15
Leej	1	20	Male	Less than H.S.	No	Married	1	2
Der	1	45	Female	Less than H.S.	Yes	Divorced	6	25
Kalia	2	20	Female	Some college	Yes	Married	2	3
Tongneng	1	50	Male	Less than H.S.	No	Married	10	28
Xia	1	45	Female	Less than H.S.	No	Married	10	25
Mee	2	19	Female	Some college	Yes	Married	1	1
Bee	1.5	22	Male	Some college	Yes	Married	1	1
Ku	1.5	30	Male	MA degree or higher	Yes	Married	6	14
Tong Fu	1.5	39	Male	MA degree or higher	Yes	Married	2	12
Chee	2	30	Female	MA degree or higher	Yes	Married	3	6
Kabzuag	2	40	Female	MA degree or higher	Yes	Married	3	15
Foua	1.5	29	Female	BA/BS degree	No	Married	3	12

### *2.5 Data Analysis*

A content analysis approach was adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to guide the analysis of the transcripts into themes. Specifically, two graduate students were trained and assigned to code two randomly selected transcripts based on two major domains by participants' generations and gender: characteristics of good parents and sources of parenting ideas and practices. Initial codes were created based on phrases or meaning units taken from the transcripts. These initial codes were brought to the team meeting, including the two coders and the first author, for comparisons. Discrepancies were discussed and rephrased when necessary to ensure all team members agreed on the final codes. The final codes were used to develop a tentative codebook for the two coders to code the remainder of the transcripts.

Once all the transcripts were coded and recorded on an Excel sheet, the first author, who served as an internal auditor (Hill et al., 2005), went through each transcript to verify, refine, and/or edit the final codes. The final edited codes were brought to the team meeting again for discussion. Due to the small sample size, codes derived from the first-generation (n=5) and 1.5-generation participants (n=4) were combined, since narratives from both generations were similar compared to the second-generation, many of whom were born in the U.S. Finally, the research team met again to group similar codes or meaning units into larger themes and sub-themes, along with frequency counts by generations and gender (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### *2.6 Rigor*

Ideas about parenting are deeply linked to culture (Bornstein, 2012), and therefore it is important to involve multiple individuals from the same culture but in different generations, as well as from outside of the culture, to collect the data and interpret the meanings of the data to safeguard against potential biases (Hill et al., 2005). For example, all interviews were conducted by three trained interviewers and all transcriptions and translations were completed by a team of trained coders, including the first author who served as the auditor. Data analysis also included team members of Hmong descent from different generations and others of different cultural backgrounds to assist with interpretation of data. Additionally, the team met regularly to debrief throughout the data analysis process. As such, we believe this rigorous process was a concerted effort to prevent our own biases from influencing the original meaning of the texts.



### 3. Results

Based on the analysis, we found five parenting characteristics that constituted a good parent; four differences between the first- and second-generation parents; and four sources of parenting ideas and practices. Presentations of the findings were arranged based on the three research questions, and themes under each research question were presented in the order of frequency of occurrences from most frequent to least by generation and gender.

#### 3.1 Providing Basic Needs for Children

According to every participant we interviewed (n=21: 9 first-generation and 12 second-generation parents; 14 mothers and 7 fathers), they mentioned that the most important role and responsibility good parents should be carrying out was to meet children's basic needs. Provision of basic needs mentioned included "food (n=9 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 8 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), a place to stay (n=7 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), clothing, and money (n=6 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen)." Leej, a first-generation father of a young child, said, "I think a good father needs to take care of his children. By taking care of the children, the father needs to find food/clothing and provide a shelter for his children to live and eat so they would not starve". Zongkhang, a second-generation father of four children, agreed:

I have a family member who isn't into parenting. Me and my wife, we try to provide as much as we can to our children... They [children] shouldn't have to worry about whether we have food on the table tonight or not. They shouldn't have to worry whether mom and dad are going to be okay or whether we have money for this or can afford that. Little children shouldn't have to worry about these. That's the parent's responsibility.

In addition to these tangible materials, nine participants, mostly second-generation mothers, also talked about providing a safe and caring home environment for their children to thrive (n=0 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 9 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen) and offering social-emotional support (n=1 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 3 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen) to "comfort their children" (Kiab, a second-generation mother). Zongkhang, a second-generation, college educated father, said:

They [good parents] provide, not just financially, but I would say a safe, caring environment like a good home, a safe environment... where their children wouldn't be scared... where there's always the care, where they [children] will always know that there's something there for them.

#### 3.2 Communicating with Children

Communicating with children was mentioned by twenty participants (95%), suggesting that this was also an important characteristic of good parents. First, good parents need to be patient (n=3 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 10 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen) and "don't get angry easily even if children do something wrong" (Tongneng, first-generation father). They "have to understand their children" (Xee, a second-generation mother). Next, they should use appropriate tones when speaking to children (n=7 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), be open-minded to build trust and compromise with children (n=2 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 9 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), be aware of their emotions and their children's characteristics in relation to age, gender, and temperament (n=1 1<sup>st</sup> Gen

vs. 6 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), listen and show empathy when interacting with children (n=2 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), and spend more time “talking to children” (n=2 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 3 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen). As stated by Xia, a first-generation mother:

I think a good mother needs to know how to choose her words wisely and gently to her children. I believe that if a mother thinks before she talks or says anything to her children, then her children will behave better.

Although both generations of participants shared many communication ideas and tactics about parenting, there were more second-generation parents (n=9 vs. n=2, respectively), especially mothers (n=8 vs. 3, respectively) who pointed out the importance of being “open-minded to build trust and compromise” with children and being “aware of one’s emotions and children’s characteristics (n=5 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen parents vs. n=1 1<sup>st</sup> Gen parents; n=5 mothers vs. n=2 fathers)”. For example, parents of the second-generation tended to stress the importance of trying to understand where “their children are coming from... [and] being able to open up a two-way communication... to compromise because they [children] love to bargain with you” (Kia, a second-generation mother). Similarly, these parents also shared that communication was more than “yelling” and “telling children what to do”; ~~but~~ it required parents “to be patient” (Tongneng, a first-generation father) and “to be aware of yourself, aware of your influence on your children, your actions, and your language” (Kongmeng, a second-generation father); “to know who you are” (Nou, a second-generation mother); to avoid “taking [your] anger out on them” (Kalia, a second-generation mother) and to really “listen to them and not just hearing them telling you things, but listening in a sense that being aware of your child’s change, their developmental changes” (Kabzuag, a second-generation mother).

### 3.3 Disciplining Children

Discipline was mentioned by 90% of the participants from both generations (n=19). Both generations tended to use communication as part of their disciplinary approaches, as illustrated in this quote:

What I do with my kids when I put them in time out I don’t just say you hit so and so, so you get a time out; I just say go get a time out and think about what you did and when you’re done thinking about what you did you can come out and tell me why I put you into time out (Zongkhang, a second-generation father).

Most disciplinary tactics discussed by participants (n=8 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 7 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen) included different alternatives to the traditional “lecturing” (*ntuas*), “scolding” (*cem*), and “yelling” (*nthe*). For example, many of the participants (n=4 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 9 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen) recalled that their parents were “really traditional and very strict” (Yer, a second-generation mother); “they liked to yell and lecture... [and made] kids afraid of them” (Chee, a second-generation mother). As a younger generation, these parents wanted to change “a little bit of that stuff because, you know, we live in America now, and not back in Thailand or Laos” (Yer). In the U.S., according to the participants, “your own kids are changing so you have to change too, and change can’t always be a bad thing” (Kiab, a second-generation mother). As such,

participants shared a variety of parenting practices used to teach and punish children when they violated specific rules, and these included “time-out”, “grounded”, “take away allowances”, “natural consequences or let them learn from their mistakes”, “reasoning”, as well as “setting rules to guide children’s behavior and enforcing them consistently” (Kalia, a second-generation mother).

### *3.4 Involvement in Children’s Lives*

Involvement in children’s lives was also mentioned by 90% of the participants from both generations (n=8 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 11 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen). According to the participants, involvement referred to the time parents spent doing something with their children inside and outside of the home. Specifically, when participants talked about involvement, two contexts were mentioned: involvement at home and involvement outside of the home. First, our analysis found 62% of the participants (n=7 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 6 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), mostly mothers (n=10 vs. n=3) mentioned that good parents monitored and are involved in their children’s activities at home. Activities mentioned included helping with children’s homework (n=4 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 7 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), playing with them (n=3 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), and watching movies or doing chores together (cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry; n=3 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 1 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen). Ku, a 1.5-generation father of six children said:

As a father, I think, you know, you need to be engaged; you need to be closer to your children and participate in any kind of activities [with them]; and you need to show your children with your support... give them advice... be there for them, participate with them in activities, even it's just helping them out with homework.

In addition to involvement at home, nine participants (n=4 1<sup>st</sup> Gen, n=5 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen parents) also discussed their involvement with their children in the community (n=6) and school (n=3). Out of home involvement activities shared by participants included taking children to the park, walking, playing balls, and barbecuing, as well as participating in children’s extracurricular activities (i.e., dances, football, or basketball practices and/or games). They also included taking children to the movies, eating out, and going on a vacation, as illustrated by Yer, a second-generation mother of three children:

She [daughter] loves to do a lot of activities: football, soccer, and dancing. She’s just a girl but she likes to do all the stuff like a boy, and I’m willing to be there to support her... My daughter, right now, she’s doing a big fundraiser for a school trip, and they wanted parents to go there so that’s why I’m helping her to do the fundraising, so that she can have that money to go on the trip.

### *3.5 Teaching Children*

Teaching children was mentioned the least (n=18) compared to the other four themes. Yet, for those participants who mentioned it, they believed that teaching children is one of the most important roles and responsibilities of being good parents. As such, their conversations about teaching children focused on three areas, and all these areas were discussed equally between the two generations and gender of participants: teaching children right from wrong or moral values (n=5 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), teaching

children to be polite and respectful (n=4 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), and training children to be responsible and self-reliant (n=2 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen). First, participants from both generations underscored the importance of “teach[ing] them [children]” moral values, since “they [children] don’t know what’s right or wrong unless someone tells them; someone that has been through the situation already” (Sua, a first-generation mother of four children). Ku, a 1.5 generation father said:

When kids are small and still growing up, they don’t know what’s right or wrong unless someone tries to teach them... [For example,] if I see you [drop your] book... I help pick it up, put it away, and let you know about it, then that is the right thing [to do].

Second, participants believed good parents should teach their children to be polite and “respect others the way you want to be respected” (Foua, a 1.5 generation mother), “treat people fairly” (Tong Fu, a 1.5 generation father), and “speak politely to the elders because in my home culture we respect the elders a lot” (Kalia, a second-generation mother). Lastly, participants reasoned that it was their responsibility to train their children to be responsible and self-reliant, “do[ing] chores around the house” (Tong Fu, a 1.5 generation father) to “help you in the future” (Zongkhang, a second-generation father). Sua, a first-generation mother, eloquently summed it up this way: “What if one day I am no longer here, they will not know how to do it”.

### *3.6 Sources of Parenting Ideas and Practices*

Based on the analysis, 67% of the participants (n=14) mentioned four sources of parenting ideas. As expected, family members were mentioned most frequently (n=6 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen), especially “parents” and “mothers”. Parents and mothers were two names that were cited more than 80% of the time, such as “I learned a little from my mother. My mother was very different from me... [she] lectured and hit. That’s something I grew up with... so I learned to change from that” (Der, a first-generation mother). Additionally, a few participants also mentioned learning from children, fathers, and the mother-in-law. For example, Nou, a second-generation mother, said: “With my mother-in-law, I’ve learned to be confident, really know what I want, and to be open”.

After family members, professionals such as college professors, parent educators/trainers, social workers, and/or teachers ranked second in our analysis (n=2 1<sup>st</sup> Gen vs. 3 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen). One mother told us that she “started out as a teen mom”, and she learned a great deal about parenting from her “teen-time parenting classroom teacher, [and] from the social worker... she taught me how to do it correctly” (Yer, a second-generation mother). Lastly, four parents (19%) mentioned learning from observing parents from various social networks and media outlets, such as neighbors, friends, co-workers, and TV shows, as well as from personal experience living in a Hmong family. For instance, Foua, a 1.5-generation mother stated: “I learned how to be a good mother for being the oldest child and for having to help my mother raise my eight siblings, along with learning from observing other mothers that I interacted with”.

#### 4. Discussion

Understanding parents' ideas about parenting, where they acquire these ideas from, and how these ideas change over time within the same immigrant group is critical to develop and/or adapt parenting education programs for immigrant parents, especially those who came from Asia. According to the twenty-one parents who were willing to share their perspectives, good parents need to take their parenting roles and responsibilities very seriously. They believe good parents provide for their children's basic needs; involve in their children's lives; communicate with their children without yelling and scolding; discipline their children with age-appropriate techniques such as time-out or grounded; and teach their children to know the difference between what is right and wrong, to be polite and respectful to others, and to be responsible and self-reliant.

Although the results of the first theme-provision for children's basic needs-was very similar to what has been documented in the literature (Gleason & Narvaez, 2019; Hubert & Aujoulat, 2018; Kahraman et al., 2017), the nuances discovered in this study regarding the other four themes add to the parenting literature that focuses on immigrant populations, especially about the Hmong in the U.S. For example, we found that the second-generation parents, particularly mothers, tend to think differently, compared to the first-generation parents, about how good parents should communicate with their children. When describing what constitutes a good parent, they tend to focus on being patient with children, being more open-minded to compromise with children to build trust and being self-aware and child-centered when communicating with children. These communication styles not only differed from their first-generation counterparts, but they also seem to be the opposite of what they grew up with in their family of origin, especially with their refugee parents. Refugee parents tend to yell, scold, or lecture. They use their position to assert their authority and are rarely engaged in a two-way communication with children to build trust and compromise (Meschke & Juang, 2014; Salami et al., 2020). This finding aligns well with Juang and Meschke's (2017) study with 1.5- and second-generation emerging Hmong adults, in which their findings highlighted differences in preferences for communication style as a parent. Specifically, their findings show that emerging adults wanted their parents to show more affection and were less focused on education or lecturing them. However, given the small sample size and selective bias (i.e., highly educated sample), future studies should include a larger, more diverse sample to determine the generalizability of these findings.

Conversely, we also found that disciplining (theme 3) and teaching (theme 5) are the two parental roles and responsibilities that seem to be stable across both generations and gender. Both generations of parents and gender used very similar terminologies (i.e., time-out, grounded, natural consequence such as letting them learn from their mistakes) and narratives (i.e., teach them to be responsible or they need to know how to taking care of themselves when they grow up) to describe what constitutes a good parent. Specifically, they believe that good parents need to teach their children about being responsible at home, making independent choices, and accepting consequences of their actions. These lessons, they

believe, are preparations to help their children “stand on their own feet”. Although these themes were similar between the first- and second-generation parents, which focus more on children’s competence and self-reliance, the specific strategies and foci seem to be different from their refugee parents, who tended to use corporal punishment (scolding and hitting) to discipline their children and a top-down approach to teaching children (Lamborn et al., 2013; Salami et al., 2020). In sum, this finding suggests that parents who were born in the U.S. (second-generation) or came to the U.S. in their late adolescence (first-generation) seems to incorporate parenting ideas (i.e., independent orientation and bidirectional communication styles) and practices (i.e., time-out, grounded, and natural consequences) that are vastly different from their refugee parents but similar to what has been portrayed in the mainstream U.S. culture, including classes, books, TV shows, and others (Atkinson, 2022).

As part of our interests in this study, we also want to discover the sources of parenting ideas and practices from the participants. Interestingly, we found that most participants in this study believe parenting tends to be learned from family members, including parents, children, and mothers-in-law. Although this finding is consistent with other studies (Berkule-Silberman et al., 2010; Rowe et al., 2016; Rudi et al., 2018), the actual narratives reveal that not every parent learned good parenting ideas and strategies from their family. For example, the results show that while some participants learned to be parent from exemplary, good family members, such as parents, mothers-in-law, and sisters, other participants learned to do the opposite of their parents, given their bad experiences growing up as a child with their refugee parents, who tended to be harsh, strict, and hierarchical in their communication. We also found that despite living in the U.S. for more than four decades (Yang, 2001) and more than half of the participants (n=14) were college educated, only a few parents (n=5) learned their parenting ideas and practices from professionals or formal settings such as parenting classes and university courses. This finding seems to be counterintuitive since parents who are college educated and fluent in English tend to use multiple sources to find parenting information (Rudi et al., 2018; Vally & Hichami, 2019), compared to those who are without a college education and have limited English proficiency (Bornstein, 2012; Radey & Randolph, 2009; Rowe et al., 2016). Yet, the narratives about what constitutes a good parent discovered in this study seem to be changing between the first- and second-generation parents from the refugee generation parents. Although an absolute explanation for this counterintuitive finding is not plausible, we can speculate that acculturation as in the form of exposure to the mainstream culture may have played a part in this shift of parenting ideas and practices without having to attend classes or workshops. In other words, simply living in the culture, consuming the media, and interacting with other “Americans” for decades without having to take classes can change one’s ideas about parenting and parenting practices, since these parenting ideas and practices are part of the mainstream American culture (Atkinson, 2022; Kuczynski et al., 2021).

#### *4.1 Limitations*

Although this study highlights that parenting, as with many practices, differs dramatically within populations and the variation that exists is likely similar to the variation in parenting practices in other groups, there are several limitations that need to be pointed out. First, our sample size was small, and it was drawn using a convenience sampling across a few organizations and public charter schools in Minnesota. Therefore, generalizability of the findings to other Hmong populations in Minnesota (Vang, 2008) or in other Asian countries is not recommended, since Hmong living in Minnesota where this study was conducted are very diverse (Budiman, 2020; Pfeifer et al., 2012). As such, future studies should consider a more robust sampling approach and study design to ensure the findings are generalizable to the Hmong population in the U.S. Second, our study only included parents who were either born in the U.S. or were brought to the U.S. as a child or young adult and not parents who came to the U.S. with children of their own (i.e., the refugee parents). Therefore, generalizing the results of this study to other parents is inadvisable. Similarly, a few of the differences between the first- and second-generation parents found in this study were based on the content of the narratives and/or frequency counts only. Future studies should focus on the three generations using quantitative measures for comparison to determine the specific continuity and changes of immigrant parenting ideas and practices, controlling for other demographic variables. Lastly, this study only included parents from one Asian American group. Although we found a few variations across generations among the parents who participated in our study, future studies should include parents of different generations from various Asian American communities to determine the role of culture and acculturation on parenting across generations and ethnicities in the context of immigration.

#### *4.2 Conclusion*

Despite the limitations, the results of this study contribute to the literature in three ways. First, this study shows that the first- and second-generation parents, especially those who were born in the U.S. or came to the U.S. as a child or young adult, have very different ideas about what constitutes a good parent, compared to those who came to the U.S. with a family of their own. The first- and second-generation parents' ideas about parenting seem to mirror parenting ideas and practices in the U.S., in which parents try to balance between responsiveness and demandingness, use reasoning to explain their disciplinary approaches to children, and encourage a two-way communication channel for children to voice their opinions (Baumrind, 1989; Pedersen, 2012; Smetana, 2017).

Second, this study included not only two generations of parents, but also involved fathers-a parenting figure that is often missing in the literature. Although our findings did not allude to any differences in relation to parenting between fathers and mothers, knowing what fathers think of what constitutes a good parent is important. Fathers, on average, have become more physically involved in their children's lives over the past few decades (Livingston & Parker, 2011). Therefore, understanding Hmong fathers' parenting ideas and practices will not only help to narrow the gap in the literature, but

also encourage more Hmong fathers to be involved in the day-to-day parenting responsibilities, since research suggests that involved fathers serve as a protective factor against children's psychological and behavioral problems (Sarkdi et al., 2007).

Lastly, this study points out that despite the number of years living in the U.S. (Pfeifer et al., 2012; Vang, 2021) and their levels of education, most parents still rely on their family members for parenting information. Only 24% of the participants reported learning from formal settings and/or parent educators. Although the sample is small, this finding calls for more research to understand the reasons why parents have not been involved in parent education programs. This knowledge can help to strengthen current parent education programs (Bavolek & Dellinger-Bavolek, 2009; Sanders et al., 2000) and create more access for Hmong parents. Additionally, given the important role parents have in their children's development (Ong et al., 2018), knowing where parents receive their parenting information and why they lack access to or are reluctant to learn from certain settings can help parent educators tailor their parenting interventions appropriately. For example, this knowledge may help local parent educators to expand their programming to focus on training other family members to be confidants in addition to providing direct instructions for parents in the classroom.

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**Note**

Note 1. Laos is a small country, about the size of Oregon, which is located between Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar.