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Generational Change in Parenting Styles among Vietnamese in Nebraska

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The goal of the study is to describe the ways in which Vietnamese American parents differ across generations in terms of their child-rearing practices. This study is part of a larger research project that examines the experiences and beliefs of parents from five Asian populations in Nebraska, namely, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indian.

**Method**

- **Participants**: 18 Vietnamese parents with a child between 2 to 19 years; residing in Nebraska.
- **Educ. Attainment**: 2 HS, 3 Some College, 1 Associate’s Degree, 12 College Degree, 1 Post-graduate Degree.
- **Occupation**: 14 full-time employees, 3 part-time employees.
- **Place of birth**: 15 Vietnam, 2 America, 1 Thailand.
- **Primary Language**: 14 Vietnamese, 4 English.

**Procedure & Analysis**

- Semi-structured 1-on-1 interviews about parenting (conducted in English, Vietnamese, and a mix of Vietnamese & English)
- Audio recorded; transcribed verbatim; translation
- Data were organized and uploaded onto Dedoose for both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

**Background**

- Research showed that Asian parents tend to employ authoritarian parenting styles, scoring high on parental control and emphasizing academic achievement (Lin & Fu, 1990).
- Nguyen and Cheung (2009) stated that research specifically on Vietnamese parents is limited. This poses the need for research on Vietnamese American parents to differ across generations in terms of their child-rearing practices.
- Baumrind’s Parenting Typology categorized parenting styles based on two dimensions: expectations of the child and responsiveness to the child’s individuality (Pratt, Arnold, Pratt, & Diessner, 1999).

**Purpose**

- The goal of the study is to describe the ways in which Vietnamese American parents differ across generations in terms of their child-rearing practices.
- This study is part of a larger research project that examines the experiences and beliefs of parents from five Asian populations in Nebraska, namely, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indian.
- Child-rearing Practices and Children's Perception
- Baumrind’s Parenting Typology categorized parenting styles based on two dimensions: expectations of the child and responsiveness to the child’s individuality (Pratt, Arnold, Pratt, & Diessner, 1999).

**Results**

- Participants were asked ‘whether or not their child-rearing practices were different from their parents’.

**Similarities**

- I pick whatever I think is good and keep it to raise the kids that way.
- There are certain techniques that I like, like our faith and how important it is to build the foundation for our kids, as well as connecting with our culture, and maintaining respect.
- My Vietnamese culture does affect how I raise my kids. I keep what’s good in the culture and raise my kids that way.
- I would probably say most of the foundation would be from them...

**Differences**

- I do not want to teach my kid what I learn from my parents because I had a hard childhood. It made it easier for me to identify boundaries as a parent. I know where not to push [my child] to or leave her at.
- Sometimes the way that my parents raise us, don’t see the benefit of it, so I don’t instill that in my children. It’s very different between my parents and ours. My dad, I see his path, but he was strict. We’re more lenient on our kids now compared to how I was raised. For example, going out and hang out with friends. In academic, they expect us to be studious. They want us to go to medical school and get a career that makes a lot of money, but I don’t agree with that, because it’s supposed to be based on your ability.
- I communicate with my kids by asking open-ended questions rather than yes/no. The old generations don’t talk to the kids much, and they think whatever in their mind is right.
- My parents, especially my dad is very strict, and I couldn’t talk back, that would be considered rude. But for my method, I try to explain and listen to my kids’ side of the story.
- I do have expectations for my kids. But I grew up here. So I let my kids speak their mind and tell me what they like and what they don’t like. When I grew up, and if I didn’t like something I couldn’t tell my parents. I was afraid to disappoint them and they would be sad. She should aim and do whatever she wants to do, and not to be scared. I want her to come and tell me about anything, any problem. I want to be her friend, but she needs to know I’m her mother too. “I think I’m more open-minded than my parents. I think they are just more... Vietnamese. They were very traditional, very disciplined.”
- My parents are like that old traditional way, it’s just that they never take time to explain why to me. All they know is “Don’t talk back”. So if they tell you something, you don’t talk back. And with kids, they are at that age where they are curious. The more you tell them no without explaining to them, the worse it’s going to get. So to me, I’d rather explain it to them and say you don’t— rather than don’t explain.

**Corporal Punishment**

- My dad is very disciplined because he is a soldier and a commander. When he says things, you have to do or you get spanked. I got spanked a lot when I was a kid. It was hard, to get spanked, really scary. To me, I don’t think it’s a way to show your kids, I mean. “I was afraid of you, but I don’t think you respect me.” I want my kids to respect me and understand what I’m trying to tell and for them to understand what’s good and bad, not violence... Violence is not the answer. I don’t spank my kids that much. Unless they are really really bad then I will spank them. And so on.
- Back then, my parents punished me with spanking more, usually spanked me more. For me, I talk to the children more than spank them. Sometimes I get angry, I whip them but after I whip them, I regret it. And I come to them and explain to them, they listen to me. That’s better than whip them and I leave them like that.

**Conclusion**

- In conclusion, Vietnamese parents retain values that they perceive as beneficial for their children (i.e., culture, faith, corporal punishment).
- Further analysis revealed that parents of this generation valued two-way communication and mutual respect for their children more than their parents did in the past. They tend to practice more responsiveness while having high expectations for their children. This reflects authoritative parenting practices that are more commonly employed in the Western context.
- Findings of this study extend the present understanding and beliefs about Asian American parenting styles. The information about Vietnamese parents of this generation also reflects the influence of the new cultural context on immigrant parents’ beliefs and childbearing practices. The results can help inform educational programs and interviews to appropriately respond to the needs of the diverse populations in the country.

**References**


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