The Pieces of Me: Understanding Vietnamese American Students

Nancy Hiệu Nguyễn, LMFT, PhD.
Counselor Education & Supervision

Hannah Tran
CSUF student-Child and Adolescent Studies
Presentation Goals

-To learn about the concepts in the ecological model and acculturation, with specificity to understand the multifaceted population of Vietnamese American students

-To learn how to integrate these concepts in working with/educating Vietnamese American students
Questions to Ponder

• What is your knowledge of Vietnamese culture?
• Experiences: What have you noticed about the Vietnamese American students that you worked with?
• What are you hoping to gain by attending this presentation?
• Racism vs Stereotype vs Microaggressions?
Vietnamese American Immigration

Historical context: Fall of Saigon in 1975 to communist government

- Mass immigration: Mostly as refugees (Leung, Boehnlein, & Kinzie, 1997).
- Boatpeople: Fled country by boat to countries such as Phillipines, Laos & Singapore
- Experienced piracy, starvation, thirst, loss of life, sexual assault and cannibalism (Kaplan & Huynh, 2008)
- Sponsored to different host countries: Majority to U.S.
- Subsequent waves: Orderly Departure Program (ODP), Humanitarian Operation Program (HO) for political prisoners and their families, and Amerasian Homecoming act for children of Vietnamese women and U.S. personnel (Kaplan & Huynh, 2008)
- Considered contemporary immigrants due to recent immigration and generally less education, less affluent background due to primarily refugee status (Pyke, 2000)
Acculturation Stress
(Shen & Takeuchi, 2001; Kim & Omizo, 2006; Rhee, Chang & Rhee, 2003)

- Person’s adaptation and psychosocial adjustment to a new cultural environment
- Adopting to the norms of the dominant group
- Cognitive and behavioral changes that occur as a result of close contact amongst different culture, especially adoption of language and values of dominant group
- Stress is inherent and can lead to depression, anxiety and psychosomatic disorders among acculturating individuals

Theory/Framework


Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

Vietnamese American Child

Pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations

Interaction between two or more settings in which child participates; child’s interactions with the outside world

Settings that do not involve child but indirectly affect the child

Culture/subculture attitudes, belief systems and ideologies

Salient factors to Vietnamese Americans across the systems

Ethnic Enclave---Refugee Experiences---Mental Health Beliefs

Chronosystem

Patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course; sociohistorical conditions
“Pieces of Me” Exercise

• Please grab a handful of “pieces” (Reese’s or Skittles [for those with peanut allergies])

• Separate them out by color

• Assign a different system to each color (Don’t mind if there aren’t enough colors for all the systems)

• Now imagine that these are the systems surrounding a Vietnamese American student you are working with

• Notice how there are more color than others

• Now you can put the whole thing in your mouth or imagine and start chewing: That is how these systems enmesh and manifest for the student you are working with

• What are your thoughts and/or feelings regarding the exercise? How will you apply this to work with your students?
Implication in Learning and Education

• Consider acculturation stress
• Ethnic identity (How do they identify with Vietnamese culture?)
• Language proficiency
• Impact of immigration history and/or generation level (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, etc.)
• Differences in educational system in Vietnam and the United States
• Differences in student/teacher roles in comparison to Vietnamese values/beliefs
For Further Questions

Please contact:

Nancy H. Nguyen

nhnnguyen@fullertont edu or nancy.nguyen@wys.org


