Parent and Teenager Conflicts in Vietnamese Refugee Families

HONOURS THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focuses on the conflicts between Vietnamese-Australian parents and their teenage children in Australia. It explores the impact of Vietnamese cultural expectations, parents' traumatic refugee experiences, and current life challenges on the parenting practices. The Vietnamese-born parents who participated in this study were refugees, who sought asylum in Southeast Asia and came to Australia under the Humanitarian Program. Their teenagers were born either in refugee camps or in Australia. The purpose of this study was to explore the effective strategies used by the participants for managing and resolving conflicts in their families.

This research is based on ten in-depth interviews with five Vietnamese mothers and five of their teenage children, who live in the Western region of Melbourne. The results showed that Vietnamese parents had high expectations for their teenage children that contributed to parent and teenager conflict. Bi-cultural parents were more likely to maintain the positive relationships with their children than traditional parents. In addition, Vietnamese-Australian youths were more likely to address their parental conflicts than the mothers. Female teenagers valued Vietnamese traditions but conformed less than male youths. They faced more difficulties in dealing with the expectations of two cultures and experienced more conflicts with their parents. They showed greater levels of resistance and gender dissatisfaction than their male counterparts.

Overall, Vietnamese parents and teenagers in this study showed an extremely low level of resolving conflicts. Both parents and teenagers tend to ignore conflicts rather than dealing with them. The outcomes of this study are to offer ways in which the needs of both Vietnamese parents and teenagers can be met and the issue of parent and teenager conflict can be dealt with and solved effectively.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

After the sudden fall of Saigon in 1975, approximately 400 000 Vietnamese people fled overseas by boats seeking refuge in Southeast Asian countries (Viviane 1996). Fifty to sixty percent of these boats were attacked by pirates and over 100 000 Vietnamese people died at sea by pirate attacks or drowning (Mollica 1994). People who survived had been beaten, tortured, lost their possessions and loved ones. Many Vietnamese women of all ages were "subjected to multiple rapes, kidnapped and sold into sexual slavery" (Mollica, 1994, p.84). Rape brought shame and permanent condemnation for the victims (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. 1998). However, many Vietnamese refugee parents risked their lives in the hope that they could find freedom, life opportunities and especially a better future for their children. This heavy investment on the part of the parents has an ongoing impact on Vietnamese parents' relationships with their teenage children in Australia.

Cultural and parental conflicts:

Life has not been as easy as they hoped. Their beliefs, values and mode of behaviour have been and continue to be challenged. Vietnamese refugees experience cultural shock when they find out the socio-economic and cultural differences between their homeland and the new country. Vietnamese culture is very different from Australian culture. Vietnamese culture emphasises filial responsibility to family, putting family needs above one's own, and the importance of conformity to the rules of good behaviour. In contrast, Australian culture focuses on self-reliance, individualism, personal freedom and independence (Feldman & Rosenthal 1990).

Vietnamese-Australian teenagers are in a transition period. Young people experience identity problems and are exposed to greater cultural conflict than their parents. Most Vietnamese parents want their teenagers to keep the traditional culture. At the same time, the teenagers tend to adopt the new behaviours, values, and life styles of the new culture, and abandon the parents' traditional values. This creates conflicts in the families, especially when young people strive for independence (Cheung & Nguyen 2001). Conflict can provoke anger, anxiety, fear, aggression, and pain. It breaks down communications, destroys relationships and lives of many people (Tillett 1999).

Problems in the new land:

Similar to other refugee groups, Vietnamese parents and their teenagers face enormous difficulties in this new land. Discrimination is an unexpected shock for Vietnamese people when obtaining housing, employment and welfare. Both Vietnamese parents and teenagers are intimidated and assaulted in their neighbourhoods, at work and at school. In Australia, Vietnamese people have low levels of English proficiency and extremely high levels of unemployment (Thomas 1997). They are socially excluded in many ways. They are not just disadvantaged material-wise but also in accessing life opportunities, to other non-material attributes and values.

As an oppressed group, Vietnamese refugees live close to each other to get mutual support and cultural ties of language. However, this limits their connection with the host culture and its members (Rosenthal, Ranieri, Klimidis 1996). This separateness makes Vietnamese people an identifiable target for media, other hostility and criticism.

Culture pressures, lack of choices, social disadvantage, and discrimination have led Vietnamese parents to focus on their children's achievements. They encourage and even push their teenagers to get higher educations, instead of entering trades or apprenticeships. Vietnamese parents believe that education will secure their children successful careers and a bright future (Dandy & Nettelbeck 2002). This helps many Vietnamese people to succeed in health care, law, teaching, and other professions in Australia (Viviani 1996). However, it also puts enormous pressure on Vietnamese teenagers, who have to perform well at school to fulfil their parents' expectations (Dinh, Sarason & Sarason 1994, Webber 2002). Clashes between parental expectation and their teenager's performance create many conflicts in Vietnamese families.

Tragic outcomes of parent-teenager conflict:

Parent and teenager conflict has become problematic and brought many tragic outcomes and long-term damage to the relationships of many Vietnamese families in Australia. It destroys the lives of many Vietnamese-Australian teenagers and dreams of parents while contributing to social problems, which is significant for this study.

In some instances, young Vietnamese may leave home, lose contact with parents and education, and can become involved with drugs (Beyer, Reid & Crofts 2001). They can experience homelessness, family alienation, drug abuse and overdose, crime, incarceration, mental illness, and suicide. Researchers have found parental and cultural conflicts were the main reasons contributing to Vietnamese youth homelessness (Zaman & Degagu 2002; Beyer et al 2001). According to Beyer, Reids and Crofts (2001, p. 171), the Vietnamese-born population has an extremely high arrest rate: "2,265.8 alleged drug offenders per 100,000 of the Vietnamese-born population in Victoria compared to 369.1 per 100,000 for the Australian-born". The number of Vietnamese-Australian born prisoners has also increased from 123 in 1994/95 to 679 in 1997/98, with 77% of them aged from 15 to 24 years.

Youth suicide is another serious issue for Vietnamese youth and often concealed from other people outside of the families. Some Vietnamese young males and females in Melbourne have ended their lives in tragic ways such as hanging and jumping in front of trains. These suicidal acts have enormous impacts on their families, community and especially on those who were involved or witnessed those acts involuntarily.

In other instances, Vietnamese parents and children find ways to deal with conflicts successfully in their families. Documented strategies include accepting the host culture in necessary ways such as learning English and sending their children to learn Vietnamese on weekends (Tran 1998). This strategy of becoming bi-cultural benefits young Vietnamese who can gain resources from their community and mainstream society.

As in most Asian cultures, Vietnamese parents and their teenagers do not share the thoughts and feelings with each other, which limit their understanding of one another. Teenagers are often unaware of their parents' traumatic past experiences and efforts in helping the children to succeed, while the parents do not understand the difficulties teenagers face because of their biculturalism. Furthermore, Vietnamese culture does not provide parents and teenagers with ways of dealing with the conflicts that makes it harder for teenagers who are in powerless positions, and for the parents, who are not equipped for dealing with conflicts.

My personal observations indicate that conflicts between Vietnamese Australian parents and their teenagers typically reflect their different expectations. Vietnamese refugee parents' traumatic experiences and present difficulties are important influences on their parenting, as

they want their children to succeed in the host culture, thereby avoiding the suffering that the parents have endured. Parents' background, traumatic experiences, loss and grief, lack of extended family support, discrimination and fears their children may become involved in delinquency can make them become more rigid in their parenting.

Contribution of this research and chapters review:

Kolar and Soriano (2000) have stated that cross-cultural research on parenting in Australia has been limited. There is not a great deal of research on Vietnamese families in Australia. Some literature focuses on Vietnamese resettlement (Viviani 1980, 1996; Viviani, Coughlan & Rowland 1993), Vietnamese culture and values (Dandy & Nettelbeck, 2002). However, value conflicts between the generations are very rarely addressed (Rosenthal et al. 1996; Dinh et al. 1994). Researchers have not studied links between Vietnamese parents' past experiences, cultural values, bi-cultural experiences and Vietnamese parenting. Furthermore, there is not any research that explores their perseverance or the successful strategies of the Vietnamese born parents and their children in dealing with problems in the new land.

Vietnamese parents are judged as over-controlling and overprotective (Webber 2002; Rosenthal et al 1996; Dinh et al 1994). This present study offers a more culturally sympathetic analysis by identifying the personal experiences and cultural meanings which influence Vietnamese parenting and the performance of their teenagers.

It is fundamental for social workers, and other professionals to take the roles of multicultural connectors when working with these families so they can build more satisfying relationships with one another. Instead of perceiving parental conflict as only a family issue, our society should see this as a societal concern because it constitutes significant social problems. It affects individuals, families, community and the wider society.

This introductory chapter has outlined the focus, purpose, significance, and contribution of this research. Chapter 2 explores the impacts of migration on migrants and refugees, and whether parent and teenager conflict is a universal problem for other ethnic groups in Australia. It examines the impact of traumatic experiences, Vietnamese culture, and current difficulties on Vietnamese parenting. It reviews the theoretical approaches to migration, the conceptual framework that informs this study, and the research questions.

Chapter 3 presents the research design with a description of the research approach and why it was chosen. It also indicates the type and methods of data collection. This chapter also includes ethical considerations, and limitations of this research. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research. It discusses the impacts of past and present experiences, and Vietnamese culture on the parenting of participants. It highlights the differences between Vietnamese parents and teenagers in perceptions of conflict and other issues. This chapter explores the effective and ineffective strategies in dealing with conflicts. Finally, it presents the conclusions for this research with some recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the impacts of migration on different migrant and refugee groups in order to identify the similarities and differences with the Vietnamese experiences including the problems of parent-child conflicts. It reviews the Vietnamese culture, the issues facing Vietnamese families, theoretical approaches to migration and interpersonal conflict. It scans findings from other research including effective parenting and conflict resolution strategies that enhance parent and teenager relationships. Finally, it presents the research questions and the conceptual framework for this research.

Impacts of migration on migrants and refugees:

Early migrant groups and current refugees in Australia experienced similar settlement challenges to those of Vietnamese people. Studies of early migrants including the Greek (Rosenthal, Bell, Demetriou & Efkhdes 1989; Tsolidis 1995), Italian (Vasta 1995), Chinese (Feldman and Rosenthal 1990), and Turkisk communities (Elley 1993), and the current refugees such as the Latin Americans and the El Salvadorians (Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino 1995) have shown that these families share many values and difficulties with the Vietnamese families. These families function under patriarchal and collectivist systems. Especially, the El Salvadorians have faced many similar difficulties with the Vietnamese such as experiences of traumatic events, continuing to suffer traumatic consequences and facing many challenges in Australia (Amezquita et al 1995). Overall, parent and teenager conflict has become a common issue in these families that creates many pressures.

Unlike the Greeks, Italians, and Chinese who have had a long history of immigration to Australia, and the Turkish who immigrated to Australia at the same time as the Vietnamese refugees for economic reasons, the Vietnamese are mostly recent political refugees (Rosenthal et al. 1996). Immigrants, unlike refugees have the choice of leaving their countries. They plan the departure and return to their homeland if they want to (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. 1998). In contrast, refugees including the Vietnamese were forced to leave their homeland and had to go to the countries that accepted them. The Vietnamese persecutions from the Communist dictatorship, traumatic experiences during the journey via

boat, and in the refugee camps have meant that their experiences differ significantly from the experiences of early immigrant groups to Australia.

In addition, having 'Asian' looks makes Vietnamese people more identifiable than other white migrants that lead them to become targets for racism including humiliation, assault and violence. In fact, Vietnamese people lack a cultural map, which provides them with appropriate and accepted ways to deal with conflicts, including lacking the concepts/discourse of sharing, talking, and dealing with conflicts. Furthermore, the lack of extended family support limit both Vietnamese parents and teenagers to gain advice from their family members, who can listen and provide opportunities for them to release tension in times of conflicts. Such relatives might have taken the role of mediators for both parents and teenagers to resolve conflicts.

Impacts of traumatic experiences:

In Australia, 80% of Vietnamese migrants have escaped traumatic experiences (Kolar & Soriano 2001). As Steel, Silove, Phan, & Bauman (2002) found, Vietnamese refugees often suffered from mental health problems in their early years as immigrants, and refugees who had undergone severe trauma had continuing psychiatric illness. These people suffered from severe psychological difficulties for many years after the trauma events occurred. They also experienced problems in work, family, marital adjustments, acculturation and assimilation (Orley, 1994).

In addition, parents who were traumatised can become aggressive. They can be over-controlling, restrictive or even neglect their children especially those who are still grieving over the loss of a child. (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Incorporated 1998). This explains why parent and teenager conflicts remain problematic in Vietnamese refugee families for many years. However, researchers have ignored the link between the impacts of trauma experiences, cultural expectations of parents, and parent-teenager conflict. It is fundamental to gain knowledge of the Vietnamese culture and their experiences to help us to understand why Vietnamese people behave in particular ways.

Vietnamese culture:

Historically, Vietnamese culture was influenced by Chinese culture (Nguyen & Ho 1995).

Vietnamese families are structured under a patriarchal system and it is collectivist in orientation (Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). Family interests have priority over personal concerns (Cheung & Nguyen 2001; Nedsdale, Roodney & Smith 1997; Dinh et al 1994). In Vietnamese culture, hard work, honour and respect are highly valued (Cheung & Nguyen 2001). While Vietnamese parents provide all material needs for the children, in return, they expect academic success, obedience, respect, and gratitude from their children. In addition, Vietnamese children are expected to take care of their parents when they become old (Cheung & Nguyen 2001).

Both positive and negative individual behaviours affect the family reputation. For example, individual academic or occupational achievement promotes family pride, while disobedience, disrespectfulness, and irresponsibility lead to family shame (Cheung & Nguyen 2001). Arguments with parents are not acceptable and obedience is the most important principle in parental relationship (Nguyen & Ho 1995).

In Vietnamese traditional families, boys receive more privileges and attention than the girls because they carry their family's name. They have a greater obligation to provide care for their elderly parents (Dinh et al. 1994). In addition, Vietnamese girl must be chaste. She has to learn to take care of younger children, grandparents, and the family home (Rosenthal et al 1996). Teaching children how to behave is the most important role of parents. Physical punishment is allowed in Vietnamese culture, which is seen as a necessary way of teaching children to conform (Kolar & Soriano 2000).

Issues facing Vietnamese families:

Despite multiculturalism, migration creates cultural disruptions for refugees, migrants and their teenagers. In the new environment, both refugees/migrants parents and their children experience cultural shocks, acculturative stresses and conflicts between generations. Refugee families face more conflicts and difficulties than non-immigrants families (Rosenthal 1984).

For Vietnamese parents:

Researchers in Adelaide and Melbourne found that Vietnamese parents have higher educational expectations of, and aspirations for their children than Anglo-Celtic Australian parents (Dandy & Nettelbeck 2002; Kolar & Soriano 2000). Vietnamese youths are expected

to spend more time studying and work towards an occupation requiring tertiary qualifications than Australian counterparts (Dandy & Nettelbeck 2002). Vietnamese parents are always concerned that the inappropriate morals of their children's peer groups in the broader community will badly influence their teenagers (Nguyen & Ho 1995). Traditional parents can become extremely critical about all aspects of the host culture and demand their teenagers' obedience totally (Nguyen & Ho 1995). They often limit their teenagers' involvement with their peers as much as possible as a way to avoid bad influences. Vietnamese girls' activities are more likely to be controlled than boys (Rosenthal et al 1996).

For Vietnamese parents, lack of qualifications has led them to face unemployment or to work in low paid jobs (Thomas 1997). This means they have to work longer hours, and even take shift work to be able to provide a good education and material wellbeing for their children. However, this may mean that they have to leave the children unsupervised and young Vietnamese often interpret these long absences as a sign of a lack of love (Webber 2002).

As Webber (2002, p.19) states, Vietnamese parents' "unrealistic expectations" of their children's academic performance has become the contributing factor in illicit drug use among Vietnamese-Australian youth. However, she has failed to identify Vietnamese parents' pre and post–immigration experiences. These parents have and continue to face many difficulties requiring greater sensitivity and cultural support from the wider community.

For Vietnamese-Australian teenagers:

In Australia, Vietnamese youths are often blamed for crimes and social problems. Many of them are socially disadvantaged and live in poverty because their parents are unemployed long term or are on a single, low income (Nguyen & Ho 1995). They face 'educational disadvantage, low health status, crowded housing, lack of recreational activities, and experiences of prejudice' (Nguyen & Ho 1995, p. 235).

Daily, Vietnamese youths are exposed to opposing values. At home, the parents teach them to obey, study hard and achieve well at school. While they learn from schools and non-migrant friends about the Western values that emphasize individuality, self-assertion, and egalitarian relationships. Vietnamese-Australian teenagers find that the values and expectations they

learn from the dominant culture are often opposite to the values instilled at home (Nguyen, Messe & Stollak 1999). This creates dilemmas for many Vietnamese youths.

Unlike Western culture, care and love are often shown at a symbolic level in Vietnamese culture (Nguyen & Bowles 1998). Parents, especially fathers, do not often show their love by words but by actions such as working hard, providing for all the material needs and good education for their children. However, Vietnamese youths do not see these as acts of love when they are compared with the Australian ways of showing love. Parent and child conflicts remain problematic putting many Vietnamese young people at high risk for the development of emotional distress (Chung, Bemak & Wong, 2000).

In the literature, Vietnamese adolescents are seen as victims of their culture and parents. Researchers often perceive Vietnamese parents as affectionless and controlling parents who show a low level of nurturance and demand a high level of control of their children (Webber 2002), without recognising their sufferings and personal sacrifices in order to assist their teenagers towards success. Mullaly (2002) states that through the process of ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism, the dominant group often measure and judge minority groups according to the dominant culture and values, which they see as the norms.

Theoretical approaches to migration:

Migration to a new land has a very strong impact on the lives of many refugees, migrants and their children. During their settlement, they face enormous challenges including acculturation, adaptation of two different cultures, and cultural conflicts. Becoming bicultural and bicultural hybrids are beneficial responses for newcomers to adopt.

Acculturation and adaptation:

Many different theoretical models have been developed to explain the experiences, processes and outcomes of acculturation and intercultural contact. They focus mainly on acculturation and social identity (Sonn & Fisher, 2003). According to Feldman and Rosenthal (1990, p.260), acculturation refers to 'the changes in behaviours and values made by members of one culture as a result of direct contact with another culture'. It frequently leads to many changes including cultural and psychological changes, such as changing values, abilities and motives (Berry 1990).

Berry's (1997) model of acculturation and immigration adaptation suggests four common responses to intercultural contact including assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation. Assimilation is a response in which the individuals move away from their community of origin toward the host society. In contrast, separation is a response where individuals move towards their community and away from the host society. Integration has been the most favourable response that encourages the refugees/migrants toward the maintenance of their cultural heritage as well toward interaction with members of the host society. While marginalisation involves rejection of one's own culture heritage as well as avoidance of interaction with members of the host society.

In Australia, some Vietnamese young persons may feel marginalised in both cultures and lose their identities (Nguyen & Ho 1995). Different responses to intercultural contact are reflected in different parenting styles. As Cheung and Nguyen (2001) state, there are three kinds of Vietnamese parents: traditional, bicultural and integrated parents. Traditional parents focus on traditional values, expect children to keep Vietnamese culture, and employ traditional parenting practices. Bicultural parents expect children to keep their cultural heritage while learning the host culture, and they combine both Vietnamese and host culture parenting. Integrated parents concentrate on their children's development and 'embrace the values of individual learning and goal setting'. They expect children to integrate the host culture values into their Vietnamese identity, and 'develop innovative ideas to involve children in the learning process' (Cheung & Nguyen 2001, p. 268).

When conflict occurs, these parents experience similar intergenerational stresses but respond to conflict differently. According to Cheung and Nguyen (2001), traditional parents expect absolute obedience from their children without discussion. Bicultural parents still expect obedience from their children, but offer opportunities for children to share their ideas and feeling openly. Integrated parents develop a variety of new perspectives to parenting and find ways to deal with conflicts.

Cultural conflict:

According to culture conflict theory, refugees and migrants experience cultural conflicts when the conduct norms of their culture come into contact with the conduct norms of the new culture. Cultural conflict creates tensions in the homes of many refugees and migrants (Aronowitz 2002). According to Elley (1993), cultural conflict models require the re-

orientation of behaviour norms and expectations, which are ethnocentric constructs while ignoring the experiences and social reality of immigrants. These models have a tendency towards victim blaming that perceive values and cultures of others as inappropriate when they are compared with the dominant culture.

Cultural synthesis - Biculturalism:

In contrast to culture conflict theory, a number of authors indicate that people "who are better rooted in their home culture report better social and psychological well-being" (Sonn & Fisher, 2003, p. 6). Studies of Vietnamese youth in America (Bankston & Caldas 1996; Zhou & Bankston 1994) found that teenagers who had weak attachments to traditional values and replaced adult Vietnamese social networks with peer culture were more likely to have low social control and tended to drop out of school and get in trouble with the law. They attached to a minority fringe while detaching themselves from their ethnic community. Unintegrated youths had more difficulties connecting with the wider society. They were more at risk for delinquency and crime than bicultural youths, who had strong commitments with their traditional values and ethnic community. In contrast, bicultural Vietnamese teenagers tended to have higher academic goals and did better than unintegrated youths (Bankston & Caldas 1996; Zhou & Bankston 1994).

Instead of learning an individualist perspective solely, young Vietnamese teenagers learnt their cultural values, foster communal attachment and interdependence. These promote ethnic pride and bonds with appropriate role models within their community, which protect them from racism (Killian 2002). Bicultural Vietnamese youths can draw resources from both communities (Feliciano 2003), which reduces their acculturation stress, promotes participation in the host society and contributes greatly to their psychological well-being. However, the desire to become part of the wider society can be limited when individuals experience 'discrimination and rejection of their efforts towards inclusion' (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder 2001, p. 506).

Cultural synthesis or biculturalism is a new model that encourages refugees and migrants to adopt the most important elements of the new culture while maintaining the important elements of their traditional culture, with the ability to blend and function well in both distinct social systems (Berry 1990). Evidence shows that bicultural orientation contributes to better performance at school (Phinney et al 2001), and impedes criminal behaviour (Killian 2002),

which helps Vietnamese parents to be part of the broader community, and maintain their positive relationships with their teenagers.

Cultural hybridity:

Cultural hybridity occupies a central place in postcolonial discourse. Instead of domination of one culture by another, cultural hybridity focuses on their intermingling. It emphasises making 'difference into sameness, and sameness into difference' (Young 1995, p.26). On one hand, it allows a space of resistance and protest. On the other hand, it reinforces tolerance, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism (Werbner 1997). Cultural hybridity provides a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion that 'initiates new sign of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation' (Bhabha 1994 p. 1). It allows refugees/immigrants and their teenagers to negotiate differences and choose what suit their migration situations the best, without coercion.

Parenting a teenager is not an easy task for any parents. According to Vietnamese cultural wisdom, it is better for Vietnamese people to learn from the experiences of others rather than to learn from their own mistakes. Due to limited research on parent-teenager conflicts in Vietnamese families, parenting and theories from Western research will be used in order to help us to understand the difficulties young people face in their adolescent development.

Theoretical approaches to interpersonal conflict:

Within Western theory, family is often seen as the important context for developing the child, while school and peer groups play important roles in the development of adolescents (Mortiner & Finch 1996). Although adolescence can be an exciting time, it is also a difficult time for all concerns (Greydanus 1997). The difficulties often result in tumultuous periods of indecision and nervousness, conflict and rebellion. However, when teenagers can handle these changes successfully then they have better understanding about themselves that help them to create clearer goals and directions (Hauser 1991).

Researchers have distinguished between four parenting styles in Western families such as indulgent, indifferent, authoritarian and authoritative (Coleman 2001). Authoritative parenting lead to better outcomes that benefits young people (Holmbeck 1996). Authoritative parents set standards, hold to boundaries but provide clear explanations, and reason with their

teenagers rather than being punitive. Both authoritarian and indifferent styles include coercive control (Coleman 2001). Teenagers of authoritative parents are more self reliant, achieve higher grades in schools report less anxiety and depression, and are less likely to be involved in delinquent behaviours than teenagers of indulgent parents (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn and Dornbusch (1999).

Parental encouragement contributes to educational attainment and occupational success in adolescence and adulthood (Bell, Allen, Hauser & O'Connor 1996). Parenting style, parents' personal adjustment and communication between parents and young person can influence teenagers' behaviour and performance at school. Furthermore, acceptance, psychological autonomy, and behaviour control also contribute to high school success (Bell et al 1996).

According to Small and Eastman (1991), it is important for parents to understand their roles. Parents should not just meet the basic needs of their children, but also guide and support them in their development, protect and act as advocates for the teenagers. Through the process of guiding and supporting development, parents can offer positive role modelling, setting boundaries and examples for conflict resolution.

Controlling teenagers has become a great concern for many parents. Evidence shows that power-assertive or coercive control has negative effects, while firm and consistent control promotes positive outcomes (Coleman 2001). Parents who constantly intrude into the privacy of their teenagers by wanting to know everything about them are different to those parents who want to make sure their teenagers are safe and occupied. Parents' intrusions can harm relationships and lead the parents to becoming inconsiderate, and coercive towards the teenagers (Coleman 2001).

In addition, low levels of monitoring and supervising are associated with high levels of antisocial behaviour in teenagers (Coleman 2001). The key to success for monitoring teenagers is to have open communication with them providing opportunities for them to share values and opinions on personal and important subjects (Coleman 2001). In these communications, power balance is needed, in which the parents have to surrender some of their power.

According to Coleman (2001), parents always want to be in control. However, when their children become older, parents often lose that control and feel they have less influence over their teenagers. These parents can become more anxious and tend to impose coercion control even using physical punishments, which leads to negative outcomes. For other parents, when they perceive a sense of low control then they may become depressed, feel hopeless, give up and let their teenagers do what they want. This also leads to negative outcomes; it affects the young person and the parents greatly.

As Condliffe (2002) state that there are eight alternative ways of responding to conflict, including lumping, which involves ignoring a conflict because of the cost of the conflict was too high to proceed, avoidance, coercion, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and adjudication. Conflict management may be on a one to one basis (where each party acts on their behalf); the representational (where the parties are represented by another person); or third party intervention (where a third party intervenes on their own initiative and that person is not a participant in the conflict) (Condliffe 2002).

Dealing with conflict is a great task for both Vietnamese teenagers and their parents. According to Neville, King and Beak (1998), there are many different strategies we can use to resolve conflicts, which can be done with the teenager alone, or parents, with both, or with the whole family or any other combination of these. Conflicts are often based on verbal arguments, poor communication skills, and poor problem solving skills. In order to overcome poor communication, we need to improve our listening skills and learn to make effective requests without making demands. To resolve poor problem solving we need to learn negotiation, compromise and to develop an action plan (Neville et al 1998). In addition, it is important for parents to be flexible and willing to interact with their teenagers in new ways that avoid serious conflicts (Coleman 2001).

According to Holmbeck (1996), conflict can lead to positive outcomes if it is adaptive such as helping teenagers to explore identity, give them the opportunities to express their opinions, realign with parents in the direction of cooperation and mutuality, learn and practice conflict resolution skills. These skills include conflict expressions, assertive behaviours and assist in development of role taking skills.

This research will utilise concepts from the conflict literature as appropriate. It will also focus

on the experiences and practices as described by the research participants without attempting to make them fit into a possibly inappropriate model.

Conceptual framework:

This research uses an anti-racist (Quinn 2003, Dominelli 1997, Thompson 1993), anti-oppressive (Mullaly 2002) that incorporates feminist perspectives (Payne 1997). It challenges racism, oppression, white power and domination and contributes to social change.

Anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches:

These approaches are utilised to construct a culturally sympathetic study. Rather than treating the acculturated young persons as the subject and the parents as the vilified 'other', this research identifies Vietnamese-Australians as an oppressed group.

In the process of developing the capacities to participate fully in the society, the Vietnamese refugees often have faced many obstacles and they are oppressed at the personal, cultural and structural levels. They experience the five faces of oppression identified by Young (1990), including exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

Vietnamese people are in worse positions than earlier migrants, either suffering from long term unemployment or working for very low pay jobs and they are **exploited**, such as working in factories, doing labouring work and outwork (Viviani 1996). Vietnamese women in high concentration areas are often doing outwork or sewing garments at home. They receive extremely low piecework rates and experience exploitation of their labour under very competitive conditions.

Lack of English **marginalises** Vietnamese parents from involvement in mainstream Australian society (Nguyen & Ho 1995). This limits them from the outside influence contacts with other Australians, and social systems including education system. It limits their guidance to the teenagers in term of choosing future careers and to deal with the teenagers' problems. When the teenagers leave home, the parents face greater difficulties of dealing with bureaucracies and daily activities if they have depended on their teenagers' skills in English, while teenagers lose their parents' support and guidance, and that puts them at greater risks.

Both parents and teenagers in those circumstances separate from each other and from the society, both are marginahsed.

As refugees, Vietnamese people are **powerless** and often do not have any privileges that allow them to participate in any decision making in the society. Their voice and sufferings are often unheard and unrecognised.

As Young (1990) indicates, **cultural imperialism** is another form of oppression that comes about when the dominant group universalises its experiences, culture and values as the norm, and expects other oppressed groups to adapt. Stereotypes apply to the culturally imperialised, labelling oppressed people as 'inferior and deviants' (Mullaly, 2002, p.46). In the media and talkback shows, Vietnamese youth are often seen as drug addicts, gangsters, and violent. Vietnamese adults are blamed for 'taking Australians' jobs', not speaking English well, 'they' should learn to be like 'us'.

In reality, Vietnamese suffering of **violence** is unrecognised by the media and others. Vietnamese adolescents and adults often suffer from physical attacks, harassment, ridicule and intimidation at school, at work and on the streets. Their 'Asian' looks and accents can put them in danger (Viviani 1996). Evidence has shown that young Vietnamese drug offenders are not violent people. They are more likely than other ethnic groups to be arrested, to suffer from the harsher penalties, and are often raped in adult prisons (Doan 1995; Beyer et al 2001).

Feminist perspectives:

A feminist stance has been adopted for this research in order to critique men's power and mother blaming. According to Payne (1997), feminism focuses concern on patriarchy characterised by men's power and privilege. Under a patriarchal system, Vietnamese men have the authority while the women have to behave submissively towards their husbands (Dinh et al. 1994). Furthermore, Vietnamese women have imposed on them the role of mothers and carers, who do unpaid and unrecognised work (Mullaly 1997). When conflicts occur, women are also blamed for being unable to promote harmonious environments for the families and failing to teach the children appropriately (Huynh 1996). As long as traditional roles are reinforced in our society then women including Vietnamese women will continue to be oppressed in their homes, in the community and society.

Research questions:

The purpose of this research was to explore Vietnamese-Australian families' strategies for dealing with parent and child conflicts based on the experiences of participants. The questions guiding the research were:

- What kinds of conflicts often occur in Vietnamese refugee families?
- What were the useful and not useful strategies that have been used in dealing with conflicts in these families?
- How can human service workers work with Vietnamese families to reduce suffering associated with parent-teenager conflict, and improve outcomes?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth, culturally sympathetic, exploration of parent and teenager conflicts in Vietnamese refugee families who live in the Western region of Melbourne. The points of view of those involved are present in this study, so they can express the meaning of their life from their own perspective and report how they experience particular events in their own terms (Darlington & Scott 2002).

This study falls within the tradition of critical research (Sarantakos 1998), as it intends to empower and give a voice to disadvantaged and oppressed Vietnamese people while offering a critique of racism and oppressions. As a critical and an anti-oppressive research, it challenges the dominant discourse that perceives Vietnamese culture as negative and the Vietnamese people as inferior. Through exploring the participants' life experiences, it encourages the Vietnamese participants to suggest possible solutions to deal with their parent-teenager conflicts. The political goals of this study are to liberate Vietnamese people from the consequences of parental conflicts and being targeted for criticism. It examines their oppressions and conflict resolution strategies, which were overlooked by other researches.

This study uses inductive method, in that it moves from specific observations or interactions to general ideas and theories (Alston & Bowles 1998). This enables the researcher "to get below the surface, to expose real relations…how to achieve social goals and, in general, how to change the world" (Sarantakos 1998, p. 39). The findings of this research can be used in education and/or advocacy to promote social justice for the Vietnamese people. Furthermore, this research is used to support, challenge and extend the information presented in the literature.

Qualitative research:

A qualitative methodology was chosen as suitable to answer the questions the researcher wanted to find out (Darlington & Scott 2002). It could describe the qualities of events under study such as the experiences of parent-child conflicts and their impacts on the families.

The interviews:

This research focuses on the experiences, meanings and understandings of Vietnamese

parents and teenagers from their own perspectives. A total of ten interviews were arranged with five Vietnamese mothers and their five teenagers, three females and two male young persons.

My own knowledge of Vietnamese culture informed my decision to interview mothers and not fathers because it would not have been culturally appropriate for me as a Vietnamese person to interview the fathers. Vietnamese fathers do not like to report their family problems to other people, especially family conflicts. Reporting conflicts and sharing their problems with others would make them feel that they have failed to manage their own homes. Losing face is a great concern for Vietnamese people.

Participants were recruited through the researcher's community work. She was already known and trusted by these people through her work with a Vietnamese organisation in the Western Region of Melbourne, where she worked with both Vietnamese mother and young people. For reasons of confidentiality, the name of this organisation will not be stated.

Before recruiting participants, the researcher met with the person in charge of the organisation to enlist his support and cooperation. He was helpful in suggesting ways and offered times to inform the Vietnamese mothers and young people. All participants were given the choice of having the interviews at their houses or where they felt comfortable and when it was convenient. Participants chose to be interviewed in their homes.

The method adopted by the researcher was an oral in-depth interview that has many advantages. It provides face-to-face interaction for both the interviewer and interviewee, which give the interviewees the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words. It also gives the interviewer freedom in presenting the questions, changing wording and order, and adjusting the interview so that it meets the goals of the study (Sarantakos 1998). It allows the interviewer to observe the interviewee's facial expression and gives both of them the opportunity to clarify what the other person means directly (Darlington & Scott 2002).

Even though it was more time consuming to use in-depth interviews rather than group discussions, this was a more culturally sensitive approach. For Vietnamese people to share their personal or family problems in front of a group would not be comfortable or appropriate. These interviews with the guided research questions focused on the conflicts that had been

experienced by the participants and how they resolved the conflicts (See Appendix 1). However, the question structure was not fixed, allowing for change of question order, even the addition of new questions where necessary. Tape recordings were used with permission from the participants.

Each interview took 45 minutes to one hour. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese or English depending on their choices. Parents chose to be interviewed in Vietnamese and their teenagers chose to speak in English. Before the interview started, the interviewer provided a brief introduction. The researcher and participant were involved in a discussion of agreed ground rules for the conduct of the interview, a formal consent form was signed (See Appendix 2), and an explanation of the tape recording was given. Some demographic information was obtained at the beginning of the interviews.

The parents were asked about their past and current experiences, including their escape journeys, their views of parental relationships, and kind of conflicts occurring in their families and the strategies to deal with conflicts and suggestions for other Vietnamese parents. Teenagers were asked about their studies, hours of tutoring and homework they spent per week and how they view their relationships with the parents. They also were asked about future careers and the strategies they used in dealing with conflicts, how they would like the parents treat them in the future and their suggestions for other Vietnamese teenagers.

The Vietnamese-born parents came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds; some were wealthy, well educated and held respectable employment back in Vietnam while the majority did not. Most parents experienced enormous traumas in their escape trips while others suffered moderately. Their teenagers were born in refugee camps and in Australia. They were studying at High Schools and in a university. However, all of them indicated that parent and teenager conflict had occurred in their families and they had dealt with it differently.

Data analysis:

The researcher listened to the tapes then translated those interviews with the parents from Vietnamese into English and transcribed all interviews. Information from the interviews and non-verbal expressions were included in the data. Information was reduced, coded and analysed. Data reduction was governed by the objective of the research and the assumptions

of its theoretical framework. The coding was based on the recurrent themes and concepts that had been expressed in key words, phrases and sentences. A matrix was used to assemble information around certain themes and points. Information was categorised in more specific terms and used to present results in a clear form (Sarantakos 1998).

The process of analysis identified patterns and regularities in the parent and teenager groups. It also explored the similarities and differences between the two groups and inter-group members. This process answered the research questions while drawing together the conclusions for this research and providing suggestions for future research.

Ethical issues:

Confidentiality / Privacy:

Confidentiality is an important issue that concerns Vietnamese people greatly. Therefore, when working with Vietnamese participants, the issue of confidentiality needs to be explained to them clearly. All names and personal details known by the researcher were kept confidential and no one except the supervisor of the researcher could have access to this information. In the findings, pseudonyms were given to each participant[1]. All the notes, taped interviews, etc. were subject to similar measures of privacy and confidentiality. The guarantee of 'confidentiality and privacy' was consistent with the Austrahan Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (AASW 2000).

Informed consent:

The researcher was available daily to answer any queries regarding the research via the phone. The interviewees received a copy of the consent forms prior to the start of the interview. Before the interviews, they were informed about the structure of the interview's process; they were also encouraged to ask questions and asked for inputs into this research structure. During the first contact with the interested participants, parents were informed briefly about the questions the researcher was going to ask their teenagers. The potential interviewees were assured that whatever they shared with the researcher in the interviews would not be judged and would not affect the relationships the researcher already had with them.

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[1]-Young people were generally known by their Anglo names, and were given Anglo pseudonyms. In Vietnamese culture, it is important to call an adult woman 'Mrs' and this convention is followed. This tittle does not have the patriarchal connotations associated with it in Anglo culture because Vietnamese woman retain their own family names on marriage rather than taking their husband's family names.

After they understood the purpose of the research, the interviewees signed the consent forms for themselves and their teenagers. Young Vietnamese participants also signed their own consent forms. Both parents and teenagers were informed that it was voluntary and they could withdraw consent at any time through out the process.

Negative effects:

This research planned to avoid any disturbances that might arise during and after the interviews. It was considered that the risk to participants was minimal. If the interviewees became distressed, the interviews could be rearranged to another time or stop completely and the participant could be supported by the researcher and/or referred to a counsellor at ISIS Primary Care if necessary.

In one interview, a female young person was feeling upset and burst out crying when the interviewer asked her about the relationship she had with her parents. Hearing her daughter crying the mother came in and tried to explain to this teenager that her thoughts were wrong. The researcher asked the mother and young person if they would like to reschedule the interview to other day. But the mother said it was up to her daughter and the young person wanted to continue. Then the researcher asked the mother if it was all right for her to interview her daughter and she agreed. The researcher also asked if she could interview the young person in private, the mother agreed to leave the room and the interview was continued.

After the interview finished, the researcher offered assistance to both mother and teenager asking if they wanted to discuss the issue further or be referred to a counsellor. They both said that if they needed it, they would come and see the researcher. Both of them were contacted the next day, the young person said she was glad to be able to share her thoughts in that interview. The mother, although had been shocked by her daughter's attitude, she admitted that it was important for her to recognise her daughter's feelings so they would find ways to solve the problems.

While the young person's distress and the mother's reaction could be seen as a negative impact of the research, the way this event was managed turned it into a positive opening up of possibilities in dealing with a previously hidden conflict.

Limitations and strengths:

One of the limitations of this research was its limited scope because of the small number of participants. However, with a small number of in-depth case studies, it offered more detail than a large number of less detailed studies. On the other hand, the language and cultural skills of the researcher and her positive relationships with the participants brought strengths to this research; Because Vietnamese parents prefer not to share their problems with outsiders or strangers. These factors created enthusiasm for people to be involved in the research. Participants were able to share their experiences and strategies of resolving the conflict in their families and bring greater awareness to the broader community. As exploratory research, it established some findings that could be tested later on a larger and more representative sample.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a variety of Vietnamese voices while showing the deep concerns of parents for their children's future, the reaching out of teenagers for help, the hopes for improving the relationships and their scepticism about the likelihood of change. It discusses the conflicts between parents and teenagers in Vietnamese-Australian families and some of the useful and not so useful strategies employed in dealing with conflicts. Alternative ways to resolve conflict are suggested by the participants to assist other Vietnamese families to deal with conflict.

The main themes that arose from the interviews include:

- Parent and teenager conflict has occurred in all participants' families.
- The impact of Vietnamese culture, past and present experiences on Vietnamese parenting.
- Challenges for Vietnamese-Australian young people include fulfilling the parents' high expectations.
- Differences between parents and teenagers in perception of conflicts.
- The gap in Vietnamese culture in terms of strategies to deal with parent and teenager conflicts.
- Becoming bicultural and bicultural hybrids benefiting both parents and teenagers therefore reducing conflicts.

In this chapter, these themes will be examined separately. Quotes taken from the interview transcripts are written in italics or indicated by quotation marks.

Participants:

Vietnamese mothers:

Five Vietnamese-born mothers aged from 40 to 52 years old participated in this research. Four of them were married and one was divorced. They had been living in Melbourne for 18 to 21 years and escaped from Vietnam by boat. Three of them escaped with their partners and children, while others fled overseas with a family member. They were in the ocean for 2 days

to 7 days and faced enormously traumatic experiences. These refugees sought asylum in Malaysian and Indonesian refugee camps and stayed there from 2 to 10 months.

The findings showed that five Vietnamese mothers still have low vocational status after living over 18 years in Australia. Two of them were unable to get their qualifications to be recognised and had low level of English proficiency that affected their employment opportunities. Only two women could speak English moderately while others spoke very little English. They worked in low pay positions, two mothers worked in clothing retail and outwork; one worked part-time in hairdressing. One mother was unemployed and the other was unable to work due to sickness. As Viviani (1996) states, Vietnamese women have not improved their income position much in the last decade.

These Vietnamese mothers maintained traditional roles of being carers for the families and working simultaneously. Their teenagers saw them as 'good mothers'. There were mainly two kinds of parents in this research. Three mothers were traditional parents; two were bicultural with one of them acting as an integrated parent. Traditional parents expected their teenagers to preserve Vietnamese culture, and employed traditional parenting practices. Bicultural parents encouraged their children to keep their Vietnamese culture while learning the Australian culture. They combine both Vietnamese and Australian parenting. Integrate parents expected children to integrate the host culture values into their Vietnamese identity, and involve children in decision-making processes (Cheung & Nguyen 2001). Conflicts have occurred in all participants' families. In fact, bicultural mothers experience less conflict with their teenagers and deal with it differently than the traditional mothers.

Vietnamese-Australian teenagers:

Five Vietnamese teenagers, three females and two males, aged from 14 to 18 participated in the research. The majority of them had Vietnamese and English names, and spoke English fluently. Four of them were born in Australia with one young male born in a refugee camp. Two teenagers studied at selective state schools that required entry by exams. Another two participants went to Catholic High Schools and the eldest male went to a university in Melbourne. They spent most of their time studying; including going to Vietnamese schools on Saturday, had tutoring several times weekly and spent up to three hours every night studying. These Vietnamese-Australian teenagers have achieved highly in their studies even though they face conflicts within the family.

Among these teenagers, two females identified themselves as Australians and one female perceiving herself as both Vietnamese and Australian. For the male participants, the one who was born in the camp perceived himself as Vietnamese, and another male as more Australian than Vietnamese. Their mothers saw them as 'good daughters' and 'good sons'.

These Vietnamese-Australian teenagers often asked for permission before they went out and informed their parents if they came home late. Depending on whether the parents were traditional, bicultural, or integrated parents (Cheung & Nguyen 2001), they responded to this request differently. All mothers in this research did not feel at ease when teenagers asked them for permission to go out. They feared that their teenagers would mix with 'bad' persons and do 'bad things'. Three traditional mothers in this research would limit their teenage children as much as they can. While two bicultural parents would let their children be involved with their peer groups but expected their teenagers to inform them. One integrated parent would encourage her teenager to mix with other Australian friends, offered advice and let the young person make choices.

Factors influencing Vietnamese parenting:

Vietnamese culture plays a very important role in the parenting style of many Vietnamese adults. However, other factors such as past traumatic and present difficulties also influence their parenting.

Vietnamese culture:

Like other refugee and migrant parents, all mothers in this study highly valued their culture and wanted the teenagers to retain Vietnamese traditional values.

> *I was born in Vietnam so my parenting focussing in Vietnamese culture, which has many good values such as hard working, obedience, respect parents and elderly people, and success in schools. I want my children to keep our traditional heritage (Mrs. Le)*

Past traumatic experiences:

In their escape trips, these five Vietnamese mothers were exposed to many traumatic experiences, including facing storms, pirates, hunger, thirst, and witnessing their loved ones and other people die. They survived. However, the escape journey and traumatic experiences remain unforgettable.

I escaped with my younger sister. Our little boat was leaking on the fifth day. We had to throw everything in the ocean to make it lighter. Men had to bail water out of the boat constantly. In that desperate situation, we saw a big ship, and hoped that they would save us but they ran away. Thirty people on the boat's deck fell into the ocean and drowned. My three cousins and a friend died on that day. I will never forget those horrible experiences (Mrs. Le).

After reaching a refugee camp, they faced unexpected experiences such as hving in poor and dangerous conditions while witnessing and facing much maltreatment.

I reached Indonesian camp with no possessions except the clothes I was wearing. I often went to the beach to wash myself then walked around until my clothes were dried (Mrs. Le).

We did not have enough food to eat in the camp. There were coconut trees but if we picked coconuts or went fishing, the camp guards would hit us, shave our hair and put us in prison (Mrs. Truong).

These Vietnamese parents risked their lives in the ocean with the hope to find a better future for their children. The importance of gaining good outcomes for young Vietnamese in Australia has become the main focus of these refugees.

Present difficulties:

When they arrived in Australia, life was not easy as they hoped; they continued to face uncertainties, loneliness and fears.

Life in Australia was very different compared with life in Vietnam. It was uncertain, very lonely and fearful because this was not my homeland. I felt just like a fish that was put into strange water; it had to learn how to cope and survive (Mrs. Nguyen).

Vietnamese parents in this study were afraid of their teenagers becoming involved with drugs, playing truant, skipping classes, dropping out of school, running away from home, mixing with troubled teenagers, getting into trouble and involved in sexual relationships.

My worst fears are for my sons to be involved with drugs and becoming bad people. Drugs can destroy their future and they may harm others (Mrs. Truong).

It is dangerous for teenagers to sleep at their friends overnight. I do not like my sons to go out late at night, because they might get drunk and where there are many girls, they might do bad things such as sexual activities, without thinking about the consequences (Mrs. Huynh).

These mothers faced tremendous difficulties in fulfilling their roles as mothers and providers without extended family supports. During the time of interviews, two mothers sent their teenagers to Catholic High schools with their parenting allowance and a part time income.

This showed their determination and the children successes required the parents' personal sacrifices.

> *Sewing is hard work, I have to work long hours and work late at night. Everyday I have to work at least 12 hours, and when it is urgent I work all night to finish the order... It is not worth to do it at all, but because of the children's needs I have to work without any limits. I want my sons to have good qualifications, get good jobs and have better futures. I never want them to do labour work like me. I want them to be able to support their families well (Mrs. Truong).*

The findings reflected the influences of the Vietnamese culture, parents' past and present experiences on the parenting of these mother participants. The parents' traumatic experiences and sacrifices in Australia had led Vietnamese parents to want their children to have a better hfe than they have. High expectations of teenagers, especially educational success is a part of Vietnamese culture, which creates conflicts in Vietnamese families. Furthermore, refugee experiences and present difficulties add further intensity to higher expectations.

Challenges of Vietnamese-Australian teenagers:

Challenges including discrimination and racism heightened the experience of difficulties for Vietnamese youths, including problems with parents' communication, fulfilling traditional gender and high educational expectations, and gaining independence.

Discriminations:

Teenagers in this study faced discrimination and racism at school, and on the streets. They stated that people discriminated against them because of their 'Asian' looks. Discrimination and racism may impede integration with the multiple cultural reference groups in wider society and lead to development of a negative identity (Webb, 2001). As Andrea stated:

> *At my school, teachers favour Australian students, it happens a lot. As Asians, we always get into trouble for little things. Teachers treat us unfairly and makes many of us dislike going to school.*

Communication problems with parents:

All Vietnamese-Australian teenagers reported that they had difficulties communicating with their parents, especially with fathers, a similar finding to other research (Dinh et al 1994). One male teenager described his relationships with his parents as "very much ordinary, not too close, not too far or problematic" and another felt that he was unable to share his concerns and thoughts with any family members. For female participants, two of them stated that they had

good and close relationships with their mothers. While another female rated her relationship with her parents was "very distant".

Fulfil parents' high expectations:

Despite the mothers' limited educational backgrounds, all of them highly valued education and had high aspirations for their children. Teenagers in this research acknowledged their parents' good intentions for pushing them to study:

> *I know my mum wants the best for me, she did not have a good opportunity and she wants me to I study so I can have a better life (Rachel).*

> *My parents want me to achieve highly at school and success in the future. They do not want me to suffer like them, sewing hard all day only to get few dollars an hour (Steve).*

Teenagers who attended selective schools faced higher expectations from the parents than those who went to other schools and had more conflicts with their fathers than mothers. Vietnamese parents often suggested and even imposed future careers for their teenagers, for example, wanting them to work in the medical field or legal system, becoming a doctor, a pharmacist, a dentist, or a lawyer because these careers were highly respected in Vietnam. However, imposing the parents' choice of careers can lead to negative effects. Young people felt guilty if they chose a career against the parents' wish but obeying prevented them from pursuing other areas of interest. One male had shown his concern at being unable to choose his preferred field:

> *My parents have very high expectations for me... They want me to get into medicine but I do not want to become a doctor, I want to become a social worker but I'm too scared of their reaction. I cannot put down social work as my first choice (Steve)*

Conflicting value systems created more tensions and hurts when young persons thought that their parents wanted them to achieve something not for the sake of their own glory but for the reputation for the parents and the families (Dinh et al 1994). A year 12 female teenager stated:

> *They want me to be a doctor or a lawyer but I want to become an engineer. They want me to do well in a lot of superficial things such as getting a high enter score so they can show off to their friends, rather than allowing me to pursue what I want (Jessica)*

When parents had very high expectations for their teenagers, the effect of this could hinder a young person from disclosing his/her mistakes in life.

> *When I have a big problem or made mistakes, I go to my big brother instead of my parents. I do not want to disappoint them because they have very high standards, they nursed me for 18 years, and I do not want to disappoint them (Nathan).*

This could create serious distress in the obedient young persons of authoritarian parents with strong work ethics who expected their children to always study hard.

> *I try to get a balance of school's work, of relaxation time, having fun and doing well. But my parents are harder working and they are always pushing me to work hard and not lay back. I'm laid back this semester because after the VCE exams, I was exhausted, but they did not understand, they told me off and wanted me to study all the time (Nathan).*

Traditional gender expectations:

Both Vietnamese male and female teenagers faced cultural expectations such as achieving highly at school and being obedient at home. They also faced gender expectations. For example, male teenagers should achieve higher than siblings and set good examples for other younger siblings or cousins to follow. Female teenagers were expected to help in the kitchen and housework. These created great tensions and resentments in both males and females who could not accept these values.

> *I am expected to live an example for my cousins so they can follow in my footsteps...I used to feel pressured when my older brother said that I had to beat his VCE score and now I feel that I add extra pressure onto my cousins (Nathan).*

> *My dad always calls me to set up the table and I've got to do it heaps of times and I get very annoyed because why me all the time, why not my brothers, they were playing games (Andrea).*

In Vietnamese families, the young one was also under the surveillance of their older brother or sister, who could discipline them.

> *When I came home late, my parents usually got angry but did not say much. But my brother was more protective about it. He usually says if I go out next time I have to come home on time or otherwise I will not be allowed to go out again. My brother is harder on me than my parents (Andrea).*

Gaining independence:

Unlike Australian teenagers, Vietnamese-Australians youths in this study faced difficulties of gaining independence such as getting a part time job. Vietnamese parents did not allow their teenagers to work while they were studying, and they thought working would affect their studies that can take away their motivation to pursue educational success. Vietnamese parents would never encourage or allow their teenagers to move out until they get married. They were afraid that having too much freedom would corrupt these young people. Negotiating independence was problematic in Vietnamese families.

Kind of conflicts:

In these Vietnamese families, conflicts often occurred when young Vietnamese wanted to go out, came home too late at night, and did not study as hard as the parents wanted, were unable to get good reports, chose their future careers, and did not do the house chores. Communication was the main problem that contributed greatly to conflicts in Vietnamese families. Because parents and teenagers carried two different sets of values and they were unable to understand each other.

Different perceptions of conflict and other issues:

There was a great difference in terms of perceiving conflicts and control between the mothers and teenagers in this study. Female and male teenagers respond to their parents' restrictions and conflicts differently.

Perceptions about conflict:

Vietnamese mothers tended to perceive conflicts a lot less seriously than their teenage children. They often denied conflicts had occurred in their relationships and called conflicts as 'disagreements'. They were concerned that reporting serious conflicts with their children would show to others that they had failed to teach the children. It made them losing face while it damaged their family's reputation. Frequently, Vietnamese people do not feel comfortable to report their family problems to others, because it might reflect poorly on their family (Rosenthal et al 1996). As Mrs. Nguyen stated:

> *Between Jessica, and me there was no conflict, we were very close. Only since my husband had an accident that affecting his behaviours, he changed so much. My children do not know how to cope with him but they had no problems with me.*

In contrast, Vietnamese-Australian teenagers were more likely to disclose their conflicts than the mothers. For example, when Mrs. Nguyen's daughter, Jessica was asked to describe her relationship with the parents, she burst into tears and said:

> *My relationship with my parents is very distant. We do not talk much, nothing to talk about. There are a lot of conflicts between us because my parents did not grow up in Australia; they do not understand how I feel.*

Her mother misunderstood that cultural differences, prolonged and unresolved conflicts have distanced them from each other emotionally even though they still see each other daily.

Furthermore, unresolved conflicts may create scepticism about the likelihood of change in young people.

> *Every time conflict occurs, they yell a bit and I turn them out, again nobody listen to anyone else and nothing changes (Jessica).*

Perceptions about control:

All of these teenagers acknowledged that their parents were good parents. One female and one male perceived their parents as "easy' and "understanding" parents. However, most of them stated their parents were "strict", "controlling" and "overprotective". These parents wanted to know where their teenagers went, whom with and at what time they would come home. Constant calling puts pressure on teenagers and creates many arguments and at times to conflict.

> *My parents do not restrict me of going to places but they make me feel pressured sometimes because they want me to come home early with constant calling (Nathan).*

In contrast, Vietnamese parents see controlling teenagers closely as a necessary act of responsible parents to protect their teenagers from bad influences.

> *As responsible parents, we should know where our children go and what they do, whom they hang around with and whom they contact. If they are involved with bad people we must find ways to stop them before it becomes too late (Mrs. Le).*

Response to parents' restrictions:

For most teenagers, especially for males, to accept parents' high expectations and restrictions were the ways to demonstrate their filial piety, keep the family in harmony, which contribute to their success.

> *I got 98.5 for VCE last year and studied quite hard. I did not go out at all. During school times and exam times, my parents were strict but it was a good thing. I can see it now... I'm happy that they pressured and pushed me along. I understand if I take things easy now I cannot have good life when I become older (Nathan).*

However, it was not easy for some Vietnamese-Australian females in this research to accept their parents' control and cultural values. They showed a higher level of emotional distance, anger and rebellion, and experienced more conflict also greater gender dissatisfactions than their male participants, which was similar to other research (Rosenthal et al 1996).

> *The stuff they tell me off is not for my disobeying them, they tell me off because girls should not go out at night and that is meaningless to me (Jessica).*

Strategies to deal with conflict:

Vietnamese culture does not allow conflict to exist in families. It gives the parents the right to make decisions and express their opinions but not the teenagers. Therefore, it provides no strategies for both parents and young people to deal with conflicts and offers no opportunities for them to practice problem-solving skills.

Dealing with conflicts were new experiences for both Vietnamese youth and their parents. These mothers grew up in Vietnam that was a collectivist society, where they learned to submit to the parents totally, which were the ways they expected their children to submit to them in Australia. Mothers in this study stated that parenting adolescents was not an easy task for them. They learned a lot from their teenagers while teaching them. They also learned from the mistakes they made because nothing works all of the time.

Parents' ineffective strategies:

The findings showed that most Vietnamese mothers in this research were reluctant to address their ineffective strategies, which might relate to cultural sensitivity. Ignoring the conflict was acknowledged as an unhelpful strategy but it was used often in Vietnamese families. Some mothers admitted that the hardest things for them to do were to admit to their teenagers that they were wrong, saying sorry, and asking for their teenagers' opinions, which would not be allowed in Vietnamese culture but they wanted to try to do it.

Leaving the conflict for the fathers to deal with:

The common responses of these mothers when conflicts occurred were to refer to their husbands to deal with conflicts, to support the husbands' views, and to comfort their teenagers later when the husbands were not around. These responses had negative effects on the teenagers but the mothers did not realise it, because they made teenagers think that both parents were on the same side and the teenager was left alone. However, it had positive effect on the teenagers when the mother comforted the teenager, making them feel less hurt.

Other ineffective strategies:

As their teenagers stated, parents often gave uninvited lectures, appealing for loyalty, and mentioned their sacrifices. Things that hurt young Vietnamese people the most were parents reminding the teenagers of their mistakes in life, assuming the worst about them, unable to

see their good characters and efforts, and compare them with other siblings or other young persons.

It hurts me badly every time she reminds me of my mistake of leaving home and how my ex-boyfriend had left me. I knew I was stupid to leave home in that time but she should not talk about it any more (Rachel).

My dad always assumes the worst about me every time I go out. He thinks that all my friends are bad, and are involved with drugs even though he has not met them yet. He cannot see good characters about me; he cannot believe that I can choose good friends to hang around with. Mum and dad always compare me with my elder sister who had double degrees, which hurts me very much. I am never good enough for them (Jessica).

These had very negative effects that can lead to rebellious thoughts such as making young people wanted to 'be bad' because their 'good efforts' were never recognised by their parents. However, these teenagers stated that they tried very hard to control themselves.

Every time my parents hurt my feelings, I tried to remember the good time I had with them and the good things they did for me so I do not do silly things (Steve).

Teenagers' ineffective strategies:

As children in the families, Vietnamese-Australian teenagers must obey the parents without question. Arguing with parents is not accepted and disobedience towards parents dishonours them (Cheung & Nguyen 2001). This created a lot of complications, stress and resentment in Vietnamese-Australian teenagers. They learn to rebel and conform at the same time. Arguments with parents were often avoided as much as possible by the Vietnamese-Australian youth in this research. However, depending on the person's personality, these teenagers dealt with conflicts differently.

Shouting, arguing and ignoring each other:

When the issues were out of control, the common strategies teenagers often used to respond to the conflicts were to 'shout', 'yell', 'argue' with the parents', ignore each other, ignore their parents' opinions or decisions, and do what they like. As one male teenager expressed:

I used to shout at them, get angry and shout at them. I said to them I could not take it any more. My parents do not understand me (Steve).

Frequently, Steve tried to put up with conflicts by making himself 'stay quiet', which made him 'very depressed' and 'very upset'. Again, it was not a useful strategy but he stated that he did not know what else he should do.

Ignoring the parents' expectations and do what they want:

Among three female teenagers, two of them tended to ignore their parent's cultural values and expectations in their own ways. Jessica often disagreed with her parents overtly while Sara did it covertly.

> *My mum tries to fit me into the Vietnamese girl's mould and I just do not fit into that. Vietnamese girls should never ask questions, never answer back, and have no opinions. You are praised for keeping in your opinions, not showing just accepting whatever given to you, where I do not think you should do that. I disagree with that strongly.... They are not happy for me to go out, but I have a very strong personality if I want to go out then nobody can stop me (Jessica).*

> *I still go out late at night and my parents feel that whatever they do won't change the situation because I still go out late anyway. Sometimes I just leave them aside. Just go and have a long lecture later without answering back (Andrea).*

Unavoidably, conflict in the family had a very strong impact on young people, bringing with it sadness that affected the way teenagers interacted with the parents.

Distancing:

Conflict distances young persons from their parents that had long-term effects. The common ways the Vietnamese youth often do to cope with parental conflict are to search for understanding from friends.

> *Towards them I just shut down, and it makes me want to go out more, because at least my friends understand me and they accept who I am and I'm comfortable to be away from my parents rather than to be at home (Jessica).*

Vietnamese youths in this study showed a high level of emotional distance towards the fathers, who often use authoritarian parenting and expect absolute obedience from their teenagers (Cheung & Nguyen 2001).

Leaving home:

Prolonged and unresolved conflicts can lead teenagers to search for love and strive for 'freedom', which exposed themselves to greater dangers. One female had disclosed that to gain her 'freedom' she had to leave home and school, being taken advantage of by other people emotionally and sexually, and mix with the wrong crowd.

> *I had many conflicts with my mum last year. We argued all the times. I got myself a boyfriend, he was older than me a lot and I thought he loved me. Later on, she found out bad qualities about him, because he involved with drugs, she disapproved of him strongly. Being me, being young and being stupid, I did not think probably... One day,*

she yelled about my boyfriend and I got really hurt, so I left home to live with him. He left me later and I wished I never left home (Rachel).

Effective strategies:

In spite of the ineffective strategies, Vietnamese families have developed ways to deal with conflicts.

Parents' effective strategies:

There were three main strategies that were used effectively by Vietnamese mothers in this study: A combination of 'hard' and 'soft' parenting, learning from mistakes, and becoming bicultural and bicultural hybrids.

Combination of 'hard' and 'soft' parenting:

The concept of balancing between a 'severe father' (nghiem phu) and 'tender mother' (tu mau) was applied strongly in their child rearing practices and was seen as an ideal by participant mothers. This strategy combined both characteristics, 'hard' and 'soft' in teaching teenagers to become pious children and good citizen (Huynh 1996, Nguyen & Ho 1995).

Learning from mistakes:

Two mothers shared the view that accepting their mistakes was an important step toward improving their parenting and relationships. They stated that working so hard and earning good money did not always bring satisfaction because they had been unable to spend time with their children in the past. This brought great regret and they had changed their attitudes.

> *I used to work two and three times more than other people. I made very good money but did not have time for my kids. As the result of that my daughter turned out bad, and she left home. I realised that having good money but not having good children, is not worth to risk the happiness of my family for the money. I have learnt my lessons and I want to spend a lot of time with my children now and treat them differently than I treated my eldest one in the past (Mrs. Pham).*

In addition, these mothers shared some other useful strategies they had used when conflicts occurred such as controlling their tempers when talking to teenagers, talking gently without threatening or shouting at them, avoiding being too strict and saying hurtful things to the teenagers. They spoke of not needing to not be the winners always, instead of talking 'down' to them, trying to promote equal communication and giving the young persons opportunities to express their views.

Becoming bicultural and bicultural hybrids:

Vietnamese mothers in this research wanted their teenagers to keep their traditional values and some of them tended to integrate the Australian values and Western parenting in their parenting. They tried to become bi-cultural and bicultural hybrids slowly, acknowledging the benefits of integrating two cultures into their parenting can reduce conflicts in the families while contributing to their children's success.

> *I want to introduce Vietnamese values to my children. There are also good values in Australian culture and I want my children to learn, too. I also want to adopt them into my parenting such as being open to the children and allowing them to express their opinions. I do not think it is fair to tell our children to be quiet and listen only. I am welcoming my kids to be opened and talk to me, so I can understand them better. Many Vietnamese parents do not accept any values from the Western culture that makes things harder for the children. Vietnamese teenagers face many difficulties in Australia because they are struggled between cultures, while other Australian children only face one culture (Mrs. Le).*

This bicultural mother accepted ways of dealing with conflicts by drawing on the Western conflict model, such as allowing her teenager to express her views. Another mother, who was becoming bicultural-hybrid, asked her son for opinions (this is never allowed in Vietnamese culture) and provided explanations of consequences for the teenagers to make decisions. This is an example of what Coleman (2001) refers to as surrendering some parental power.

Vietnamese bicultural parents let their children be involved with their peer groups while expecting them to inform parents to ensure the teenagers' safety. They opened opportunities for good communication that led to positive negotiations while promoting problem solving skills for both parents and teenagers. They found that positive and healthy relationships require contributions from both sides.

> *My mum is still in control but for the better. My mum amazes and shocks me how much she had changed. I think I have changed, too. I do not want to hide things from her any more. I always let her know where I go and whenever we have problems, we sit down and talk about it. Actually, talking is very good. Our relationship has improved and my family is a lot happier now (Rachel).*

Teenagers' effective strategies:

Vietnamese-Australian teenagers in this research described some useful strategies they had used to deal with conflicts. For example, when conflict occurs, it is useful to accept the parents' authority, not to answer back, stay out of their way and go for a walk, letting things cool down then talk when an appropriate time arises, problems can be solved more easily

when both sides were not 'too hot'. Teenagers stated that they should not get into some situation in the first place and listen to parents more.

Other useful strategies were suggested include:
- ❖ **Letting the parents finish what they have to say**
- ❖ **Letting the parents know their feelings:** without expressing anger
- ❖ **Honesty towards parents:** letting them know about the mistakes teenagers make and
- ❖ **Negotiating ways to deal with their differences**

Even though teenagers stated these ideas, they were in less powerful positions for dealing with conflict than parents.

The findings from this research show enormous difficulties both Vietnamese parents and teenagers face in this country. Vietnamese mothers are socially excluded, putting all their efforts including making sacrifices to assist their children to succeed. Their efforts also reflect how they see themselves as having no future and inferior, so they put their hopes in their teenagers.

These five Vietnamese-Australian youths showed great strength in maintaining the harmony in the families while trying to achieve well at school and university. They suffered from many pressures including parental conflicts. All parents in this study stated that they worked hard to build a future for their children but they did not realise the dangers of not spending time with their teenagers and by the time they are able to save good money and have many possessions, they have no children to share them with.

This research indicates that mothers tend to under-estimate the impact of conflict; Vietnamese mothers and teenagers have limited strategies. Bicultural mothers dealt more constructively with conflict than traditional mothers. In addition, young Vietnamese-Australians experienced great distress, unhappiness, and were at risk of delinquency behaviours most feared by parents.

It is important for Vietnamese people to spend time with their children that helps to build up positive relationships. Through talking, they can equip themselves with communication and problem-solving skills while prevent parental conflict and further damage. When parent and

teenager conflict can be dealt with in a culturally appropriate way then our society may begin to have less social problems.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the serious issue of parent and teenager conflicts in Vietnamese families and the reaching out of teenagers for help. The findings show that Vietnamese refugee families face many conflicts in their relationships, and how the teenagers are relatively powerless to resolve these conflicts. How Vietnamese parents and teenagers respond to conflicts have important consequences. A lack of a cultural map hinders the successful dealing with conflicts within Vietnamese-Australian families.

This study confirmed the different outcomes of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles (Holmbeck 1996). Authoritarian parenting creates many conflicts in the families while an authoritative style leads to positive outcomes. Additionally, becoming bicultural (Cheung and Nguyen 2001), and bicultural hybrids enhances the relationships of Vietnamese families that benefit young people greatly such as learning and practicing conflict resolutions while reduces conflict.

Western conflict theories and literature about parent and teenager conflict clearly have something to offer Vietnamese-Australian families. The strategies used by Vietnamese parents and teenagers were those characterised as lumping, avoidance and coercion in the literature. These strategies were missing the important factors of negotiation, conciliation and mediation. It seems likely that increasing families' skills for dealing with conflict will improve outcomes for Vietnamese youth. However, achieving this increase in skills presents some challenges.

Western theories and ideas cannot be simply transferred to Vietnamese people because of suspicion of the host culture, and the way that some aspects run counter to important Vietnamese cultural values. Vietnamese people need culturally appropriate ways of learning about conflict including learning from mistakes and successes of other Vietnamese adults, and community leaders. Taking account of these factors, useful social programs for Vietnamese parents and young people can help to bring positive outcomes.

It is important for social workers, other professionals, educators and policy planners to consider the implications of traumatic post war, migratory experiences and the stresses

inherent in making the transition between different cultures when working with Vietnamese famihes. Understanding the parents' past and present experiences, their difficulties of bicultural parenting, the teenagers' challenges and Vietnamese cultural values can help professionals to identify their strengths, instead of focus on their weaknesses. It is important for social workers and other professionals to be culturally sensitive, including understanding the Vietnamese culture and being sympathetic towards Vietnamese refugee parents who have refugee experiences. These parents have tried to fit into the host culture while keeping their traditions, raised children in a different country, and dealt with parent and teenager conflict without guidance. It is also extremely important for professionals to work from an anti-racist perspective. They need to acknowledge and work to eliminate the racism experienced by the Vietnamese community.

Professionals should make Vietnamese parents and young people feel welcome and respected, while offer them the opportunity to build their trust before they can share the reasons behind their behaviour. When working with Vietnamese refugee families, it is crucial for professionals to understand their culture, the parents' perspectives and teenagers' difficulties without being judgemental. Vietnamese parents believe that their child rearing practices are based on good intentions and it should be acknowledged. This is consistent with cultural sensitivity and solution/strengths focus approaches to social work practices (Dominelli 1997; Elliot, Mulroney & O'Neil 2000). Professionals can take the role of mediators in assisting Vietnamese families to resolve conflicts.

Professionals should acknowledge the Vietnamese parents' hard work and efforts in parenting to assist them to fulfil their roles more successfully. Effort should be made to help Vietnamese refugees to understand the cultural conflicts, struggles, needs of their teenage children and how to deal with parent and teenager conflicts effectively when they occur. Vietnamese parents should be encouraged to give up some of their power as parents, to break out of the communication barriers with their teenagers by spending more time and having mutual communication with their teenagers on a regular basis, by giving their children the opportunities to express their views. Furthermore, Vietnamese-Australian teenagers should be encouraged to understand the parents' experiences, to learn and keep their traditional values, and to be involved with the ethnic community so they can foster communal attachment and interdependence.

Prevention is far better than a cure. It is important to develop educational materials in Vietnamese to promote consciousness-raising for Vietnamese parents about the consequences of parental conflicts. So they can prepare before the children reach adolescence and before serious conflict occurs. These materials should provide effective and manageable strategies for parents and young people to deal with conflicts, while empowering them at the personal and cultural level (Mullaly 2002). Vietnamese people should be informed that parental conflict is a common issue that all families face, not just theirs alone. Seeing its structural cause can remove the blame for Vietnamese adults' parenting and teenagers' behaviours.

It is recommended that social workers and counsellors should be available in schools to assist parents and teenagers to understand the consequences of the mismatch between the parents' cultural expectations and the children's behaviour. Because Vietnamese parents rarely bring their families' problems to therapy, educational and prevention programmes should be organised at primary and high schools where there is a high number of Vietnamese children attending, and in the Vietnamese community. So with encouragement and support, Vietnamese parents can share with one another, their experiences in parenting in a comfortable and secure environment.

In groups, Western parenting materials should be presented in a culturally appropriate way to help Vietnamese parents to learn, adapt and adopt without promoting cultural imperialism but with the purpose of meeting the needs of teenagers in Australia. When Vietnamese parents can adapt to the Australian parenting style into their parenting then their teenagers can function better in both cultures. It also helps to reduce and resolve conflict in the families.

Professionals need to link between the individual disadvantage and social context. Culturally appropriate services are urgently needed for Vietnamese parents and teenagers to deal with conflicts effectively, before these lead to further damage. Anti-racist practice should focus on empowerment, which gives the Vietnamese people as much control as possible over their circumstances, instead of creating dependency and making them subject to agency power. Support services should perceive parent and teenager conflicts not as personal problems only but problems that have structural reasons, which need to be clearly understood.

Further research is needed, in which the researcher needs to take a step back and investigate how the Vietnamese bicultural families and other groups of refugees in Australia adapt

Western ideas and deal with conflict effectively without giving up their own culture. Action research is also needed in order to understand the issue of parent and teenager conflict at the structural level. A greater understanding can then contribute to better outcomes. Action research needs to involve a greater number of people in the Vietnamese community, including their community and religious leaders, bicultural counsellors, and Vietnamese media. They can become great sources to inform and educate Vietnamese people about these issues, which they would not understand if communicated in English. Such research can contribute to creating changes include influencing policy and practice, and promoting social justice for the Vietnamese oppressed group at the structural level. This research should ensure that the voice of those most affected by the research, the Vietnamese refugees and their teenagers, who have immigrated in this new land, will be heard and their needs can be met.

Once Australian society has a better understanding of the multiple issues the Vietnamese community faces, hopefully there will be a greater determination to assist them to build healthier and better relationships with one another and with the wider community.

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APPENDIX 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PARENTS:

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- Did you have refugee experiences? If so could you describe the escape trip?
- What was it like in the refugee camp?
- What dream do you have for your children?
- What are your concerns for the teenager?
- How would you describe your relationship with your son (or daughter)?
- What kinds of disagreements (or conflicts) often arise in your family?
- When conflicts occur, how do you deal with them?
- Are there any strategies, which you find useful or useless in resolving conflicts?
- What are your suggestions for other parents and teenagers?

TEENAGERS:

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- Did you escape from Vietnam with your parents or experience refugee camps?
- Can you describe your relationship with your parents?
- What sort of conflicts often arises in your family?
- How do you deal with them and how do they result?
- Are there any strategies that you find useful or useless in resolving conflicts?
- How do your parents treat you now when conflicts arise?
- Is this how you would like them to treat you?
- If not, how would you prefer for them to treat you?
- What are your suggestions for other parents and teenagers?

APPENDIX 2

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

I, _____ agree to give consent for my child _____
     (Parent's name)   (Child's name)

who is_____ years old, to participate in personal interview conducted by Mai Xuan Thi Tran, a Honours Social Work student at the Victoria University of Technology, who is currently undertaking a research project exploring the issue of parent and child conflict among Vietnamese refugees in the Western region of Melbourne.

I have been fully informed of the research and understand that I have the right to withdraw consent for my child's participation at any time during the research process.

I give consent for Mai Xuan Thi Tran to interview my child and use the information from the interview:

- As a part of the research material and findings.
- In broader use for educational purposes.

The consent of use of any material is conditional subject to measure ensuring privacy and confidentiality.

_____
(Parent of participant's signature)

_____
(Date)

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Mai Xuan Thi Tran, ph. xxxx xxxx, or xxxx xxx xxx). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact Dr. Marty Grace, Social Work Unit, St Albans Campus, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).

APPENDIX 3

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

I,_____,of_____

(Participant's name)   (Address)

certify that I am_____ years old and that I voluntarily give my consent to participate in the

(Age)

research entitled: 'Parent and child conflicts in Vietnamese refugee families', being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by Mai Xuan Thi Tran, a Honours Social Work student.

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Mai Xuan Thi Tran and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures.

Procedures:

An individual-taped recoded-interview will be conducted for 45 minutes to one hour at the place of my choice.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: .... }

Witness other than the experimenter: **Date: ....**

....}

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Mai Xuan Thi Tran, ph. xxxx xxxx, or xxxx xxx xxx). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact Dr. Marty Grace, Social Work Unit, St Albans Campus, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).