Vietnamese American Families’ Perceptions of Children’s Mental Health: How Culture Impacts Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) in a Community Mental Health Clinic

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I. History of Vietnamese immigration and refugee status

II. Mental health concerns unique to Vietnamese American children, parents, and families

III. Discussion of past research on PCIT with ethnic minority children and community mental health

IV. Information on cultural adaptation/tailoring to Vietnamese Americans

V. Discussion on the outcomes of Vietnamese American families in PCIT- ECBI, PSI, DPICS

VI. For consideration for sustainability
Vietnamese Children and Families

- Historical context: Fall of Saigon in 1975 to communist government
- Mass immigration: Mostly as refugees (Leung, Boehnlein, & Kinzie, 1997).
- Boatpeople: Fled country by boat to countries such as Philippines, Laos & Singapore
- Experienced piracy, starvation, thirst, loss of life, sexual assault and cannibalism (Kaplan & Huynh, 2008)
- Sponsored to different host countries: Majority to U.S.
- Subsequent waves: Orderly Departure Program (ODP), Humanitarian Operation Program (HO) for political prisoners and their families, and Amerasian Homecoming act for children of Vietnamese women and U.S. personnel (Kaplan & Huynh, 2008)
- Considered contemporary immigrants due to recent immigration and generally less education, less affluent background due to primarily refugee status (Pyke, 2000)
Vietnamese American Parents

Many parents coping with trauma of war, refugee experience, and postwar adjustment (Kaplan & Huynh, 2008)

Research has shown that Vietnamese parental mental health concerns can adversely affect family dynamics including parent-child relationships (Leung, et al., 1997)
Vietnamese American Parents

• Includes trauma, PTSD, depression and anxiety (Kaplan & Huynh, 2008), suicide (Ida & Yang, 2003)
Mental Health Needs of Vietnamese American Children

Vietnamese parents viewing discipline and physical punishment as intertwined, alerting of child protective services (Rho & Rho, 2007)

Acculturation and adjustment issues: identity formation, language barriers (Chun & Sue, 1998)
Mental Health Needs of Vietnamese American Children

Acculturation and adjustment Model minority myth (Ida & Yang, 2003), pressure to perform lead to internalizing disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Mental health concerns related to war and refugee experience transmitted through parents/family: depression, anxiety, family grief over loss of life, attachment problems (insecure, ambivalent, disorganized) (Wahmanholm & Westermeyer, 1996; Wiese, 2010).
Vietnamese American Children and Parents
(Leung et al., 1997; O’Connor, 2005; Pyke, 2000)

- Vietnamese families have different role definitions, familial expectations, hierarchal relations, caution in emotional expressiveness and collectivistic values than mainstream US culture (Pyke, 2000)
- Important to balance (O’Connor, 2005):
  - Dominant culture
  - Family’s culture of origin
  - Acculturation of child
Vietnamese American Children and Parents
(Leung et al., 1997; O’Connor, 2005; Pyke, 2000)

- Intergenerational gap between parents and children when children try to integrate American values and standards with those from traditional Vietnamese culture (Pyke, 2000).
- Difficulties in communication in parent-child relationship and parental concerns about child social behaviors, school performance, personal behaviors and anti-social behaviors (Leung et al., 1997)
Counseling: Barriers for Vietnamese Americans’
(Kaplan & Huynh, 2008; Leung, et al., 1997; Thai, 2002)

• Higher prevalence of mental health issues, yet underuse mainstream mental health services
• Barriers to counseling:
  Language
  Reluctance to disclose personal history
  Cultural values
  Lack of knowledge about mental health services
  Culturally insensitive practices
  Differences in how minorities process learning
  Difficulty distinguishing between mental and physical health
  Stigmas attached to counseling
  Conflicts among generations of Vietnamese families
(Lyon and Budd, 2010)
- The use of PCIT is found to be effective with underserved communities.
- The most influential factor to success is remaining in treatment, but the limitation to success is early drop-out/attrition.
- Additional research is required in order to establish that PCIT as an empirically supported treatment across ethnic minority groups.

(Leung, Tsang, Sin and Choi, 2015)
- The intervention group participants were able to maintain change 3 months after completion of PCIT, providing evidence that PCIT was effective with Chinese parents and children. These findings add to the literature that PCIT is effective across cultures (i.e. Latin Americans and African Americans).
- In Asian cultures extended family members are part of providing child care, therefore it would be beneficial to conduct surveys and gather data from extended family members that are part of providing care for the child.

(Matos, Torres, Santiago, Jurado and Rodriguez, 2006)
- Similar to other studies, this research concluded that using culturally sensitive methods and modifications are effective for PCIT treatment. More specifically, the study compared 3 groups: PCIT Treatment, GANA treatment (PCIT in Spanish) and Treatment as Usual. Researchers found that PCIT treatment was most superior and effective compared to other treatments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>No materials</td>
<td>Translate CDI portion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise not norm</td>
<td>Abstract versus Action</td>
<td>Action focused praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of play as non-purposeful</td>
<td>Behavior focused versus action focused</td>
<td>Solution Focused Play Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of “ha” with reflections that sounds ?</td>
<td>Cultural norm for “ha”</td>
<td>Work with parents on removal, count as reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception as lack of generalization towards school</td>
<td>Mental health stigma in VA culture, more accepted if school related</td>
<td>Tie to school based incentives (sitting in chair, use of rules, clean up as parallel to classroom)</td>
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## Cultural Adaptation/Tailoring to Vietnamese Americans

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of familiarity with positive reinforcement, rewards/incentives</td>
<td>Authoritarian shame based parenting with corporal punishment in Vietnam</td>
<td>Collateral sessions with parents, information on alternatives to physical punishment, psychoeducation on child abuse laws in US/CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of familiarity with certain pretend play toys</td>
<td>Food kit, plates/utensils, dolls, furniture (mainstream based)</td>
<td>Inclusion of ethnic specific food, utensils (noodles, chopsticks), Asian dolls with extended family members, clothing</td>
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Culture Specific Toy Examples
PCIT Outcome Measure- ECBI

ECBI

Intensity  Problem

Raw Score

T-Score
PCIT Outcome Measures- PSI

The bar chart represents the PSI scores for different categories:

- Defensive Responing
- Parental Distress
- Parent-Child Disfunctional Interaction
- Difficult Child
- Total Stress

The chart includes raw scores and T-scores.
DPICS- Change at Opening and Closing of Treatment

![Bar chart showing the change in DPICS at opening and closing of treatment.](chart.png)

- **Parent Talk**: Increase at closing.
- **Unlabeled Praise**: Decrease at closing.
- **Labeled Praise**: Increase at opening.
- **Reflections**: Increase at opening.
- **Behavior Descriptions**: Increase at closing.
- **Questions**: Decrease at opening.
- **Indirect Commands**: Increase at closing.
- **Direct Commands**: Increase at opening.
- **Negative Talk**: Increase at opening.
For Consideration - Sustainability

Micro

• Group of MSW/MFT trainees, Clinical Staff, Psychology Interns, bachelor’s level mental health workers of Vietnamese American background/language capabilities

• Teach key “buzzwords” during training of trainees

Macro

• Grant and funding for protocol refinement and further studies- Outcome based

• Collaborate and provide training on culturally sensitive services to Vietnamese American population

• Training in overall basics of PCIT- Further more accurate translation of CDI and PDI


References


Discussion: Questions/Comments??
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