



They Came Here for Us: Challenges for Vietnamese American Nursing Students

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Disclosure

- ▶ I have no commercial or financial interests to disclose.



Background

- ▶ Vietnamese American Nurses
 - ▶ Are among the most underrepresented minorities
 - ▶ Face challenges similar to those of other non-traditional students
 - ▶ Challenges may influence academic success and contribute to underrepresentation



Method



- Qualitative methods were deemed the best to provide understanding of the participants' experiences.
- Using principles derived from critical race theory, "counterstories" of those outside the dominant culture to offer insight into a culture different from that of faculty.
- Phenomenologically based interviews were used to explore the experiences of twelve Vietnamese American who were nursing undergraduates or recent graduates



Literature Review

- ▶ Complex balance between disparate cultural expectations
 - ▶ Conflicts associated with traditional roles of women and desire for socioeconomic advancement for the family.
 - ▶ Need to behave differently with non-Asians and Asians.
 - ▶ Increased attrition among students with ESL and increased family responsibilities
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Results



- ▶ The pressure of family expectations

- ▶ *"It's like pressure. In my head, I'm thinking, I have to do this for my family, so I have to understand everything."*
- ▶ *"When I don't do well, I can see the disappointment in their eyes, it's not a good feeling. They came here for us... and the whole family."*
- ▶ Support for immediate family members as well as distant relatives
 - ▶ Financial, language, role modeling for younger siblings
 - ▶ *"We are paying my grandfather's hospital bill. He had a stroke. My grandmother has 14 kids. Because my dad is the oldest, it's our responsibility to take care of everything."*
 - ▶ *"Our income helps my parents with household expenses. My mom stays home to care for my brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews. There are 12 in our house."*
 - ▶ *"My mom cooks but I take her to the supermarket. My sisters usually take her to doctor appointments. We often translate for her, she gives me forms to look over or make appointments. It's difficult to translate some things. She has to wait for help."*



Results



- ▶ Limited socialization
 - ▶ Close ties with family limited opportunities for socialization with peers
 - ▶ *"They would go to other people's houses but not go out bowling or to a movie. They had mostly Asian friends. Some white friends from the church that sponsored them to come here would come to visit. The first year at college was the hardest. It was a shock to be surrounded by people my own age all the time."*
 - ▶ *"My parents wanted us to work and study growing up. I didn't hang out with people my age."*
- ▶ Nursing provided these students with a means to advance themselves and their families
 - ▶ Nursing offered the chance to help provide security and status for families as well as personal achievement.
 - ▶ *"I'm the first daughter getting a bachelor's degree in anything, so to them, it's a really big deal. Especially for my dad, who really pushed going to school because he wasn't able to have the opportunity himself. They happy not just because of the financial aspect. I'll have my own money, but I don't want to sound like I'm bragging, but in our community, it's a big deal. If you have a son or daughter who is a doctor or a nurse, as parents, they did it right. It makes them very proud and very happy and I'm happy to give that to them."*



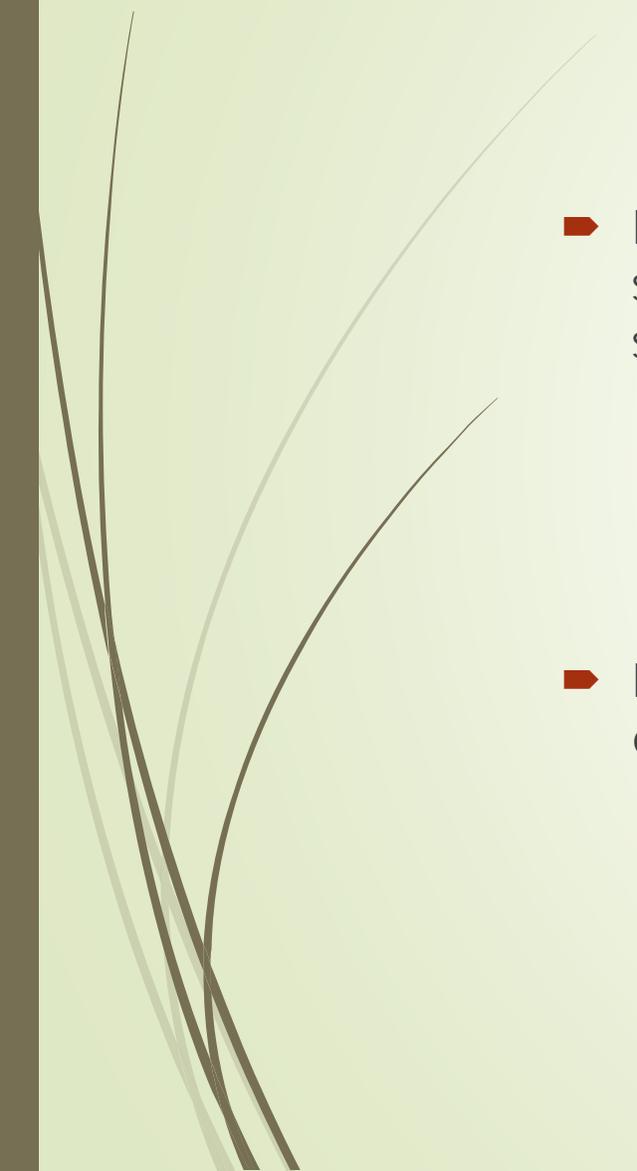
Results



- ▶ Living in two worlds
 - ▶ The dichotomy between the traditional roles of Vietnamese women and American working women were apparent to participants.
 - ▶ *"All the girls in my family, we go through the same thing. The girls are more responsible than the boys".*
 - ▶ *"Even at 27 they treat me like I'm in high school. Even though my brother has to do nothing, they expect everything from me. Everyone says it's because you are the girl, but I still don't think that makes any sense."*
 - ▶ Struggling to be respectful of cultural beliefs and values while nursing requires them to be independent and outspoken.
 - ▶ *Sometimes I think it's my ethnicity, but sometimes I don't look people in the eye, and sometimes I have anxiety of about asking questions and I also think I have an accent so I think that is kind of an issue too, because I don't feel comfortable.*
 - ▶ The responsibility for helping parents was often a duty assigned to daughters.
 - ▶ *"I'm the youngest daughter and I'm unmarried. I have a lot of family responsibilities, so I decided to go back to school later in life. My parents are retired, my dad is well now. I still live with my parents and I'm still very much responsible for taking care of my mom as well as my dad, as well as working."*



Conclusions and Recommendations



- ▶ Responsibility to family and stress associated with financial and social support for parents and other family members was a common source of stress for participants.
 - ▶ Participants perceived that this aspect of their lives was different than that of their peers from other ethnic backgrounds
 - ▶ This burden and the rigor required in nursing programs was overwhelming and strained family relationships.
- ▶ Educators, including those in nursing are seldom trained to understand the difficulties faced by immigrant and refugee students and their families.
 - ▶ Transcultural approach to nursing education increasing awareness and sensitivity to needs of students from diverse backgrounds.



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