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# Encountering the American School System Through the Eyes of First- and Second- Generation Vietnamese Immigrant Parents

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Encountering the American School System Through the Eyes of First- and Second-  
Generation Vietnamese Immigrant Parents

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College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership

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## **Abstract**

As the immigrant population increases in the United States, it is important for American administrators and teachers to form effective partnerships with immigrant parents. With these partnerships, schools can encourage greater direct parental involvement from immigrant parents. Active parental involvement positively correlates with academic success; however, active parental involvement is not seen as much in Asian parents compared to other ethnic groups. Current literature shows lack of direct parental involvement in Asian parents due to barriers such as cultural differences, language, education level of parents, absence of knowledge about American schools, and school-based barriers; however, little is known about Vietnamese immigrant parents. This ethnographic study sets out to understand more about the concerns and challenges of first- and second- generation Vietnamese immigrant parents through the use of interviews and questionnaires. The analysis of the data identifies language and cultural differences as primary barriers to greater direct parental involvement from Vietnamese immigrant parents. First- and second- generation Vietnamese parents had different worries and experiences with the American school system; however, both highly valued education. First- generation parents worried about the social and academic aspects such as how their children would understand and fit in with their new teachers and friends that speak a different language. Second generation parents worried that American schools were not academically challenging their children. Understanding these concerns of parents would help teachers and administrators create effective strategies to increase parental involvement with this cultural group.

*Keywords:* immigrants, parental involvement, barriers

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, husband, and children. I could not have done this without the support and understanding of these special people.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction to the Problem**

What is the importance of forming partnerships with parents of English Language Learner (ELL) students? The population of immigrants in the United States is greater now than ever; and non-English speaking students, along with their parents, have increased in population in American schools (Brown, 2014). From 2000 to 2012, about 2.8 million Asian children ages zero to fourteen have or will enter American schools. The increase in Asian students in American schools means schools need to form partnerships with foreign-born Asian parents. Past literature suggests there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and the educational outcomes of students (Griffith, 1998).

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework of the Problem**

Past studies have place great emphasis on the involvement of parents in the academic success of their children (Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999). Schools work diligently to promote positive relationship with parents in order to increase student success. Researchers formulated different strategies to improve the relationship between home and school; however, schools still struggle to for effective communication with parents of English Language Learners (ELL). If American schools wish to further expand their partnership with ELL parents then they first need to understand the struggles and concerns these parents may have with the school.

Other studies have shown barriers such as language, education of parents, cultural differences, etc. stand in the way of a positive home-school partnership (Li, 2006; Murphy, 2005). Lack of research done on the barriers of Asian families and American schools has left teachers and other school officials with a lack of understanding about

these families, which led to the misunderstanding that Asian parents are not involved in the learning of their child. This knowledge will help schools in the fight to form effective communication with ELL parents and to further involve these parents in the academic life of their children.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem here is that American schools seem to have specific difficulty motivating Asian parents and Vietnamese parents to become involved in school functions and classroom volunteer work. Parental involvement is defined as the collaboration between parents and schools to encourage academic success of the student (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Some teachers and school members view collaboration as involvement in school functions, aiding in classrooms, or attending teacher conferences. Through this definition, some schools and teachers view Asian parents as less involved in the education of their children compared to parents of other races.

Contrary to this, Asian parents are just as involved in the educational life of their children, but their involvement occurs in ways that are different from parents of other ethnicities. Asian parents tend not to be directly involved with the schools but provide more support for education at home (Phan, 2004). This indicates that American schools lack knowledge and understanding on Asian parents. Research indicates American schools struggle forming effective relationships and collaboration with parents of ELL students, to include Asian parents. Researchers have uncovered different barriers leading to the gap between the parents and schools such as language, cultural differences, absence of knowledge about American schools, school-based barriers, and the educational history of parents (Arias & Morello-Campbell, 2008; Li, 2006; Murphy, 2005).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to share the experiences, struggles, and worries of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents and the American school system. This ethnographic study also identifies differences between the barriers of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. This will assist American educators differentiate their parental involvement strategies to increase parental involvement with Asian parents.

## **Research Questions**

The following three research questions guided the design of this study:

1. What can Vietnamese parents tell about their challenges and worries with the American school system?
2. How do the challenges of first-generation Vietnamese parents differ from second-generation Vietnamese parents in the United States?
3. How do the challenges faced by Vietnamese parents when they interact with American schools and educators affect their parental involvement?

## **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

Past research indicates the importance of parental involvement in the academic success of students and showcases strategies to improve partnerships between schools and the home; however, there is little discussion and research regarding Asian parents. There is even less research about the experiences and challenges of Vietnamese immigrant parents with American schools. Although research such as Arias and Morello-Campbell (2008) examined the different barriers for parents of ELL students, they did not offer discussions on any specific ethnicity of the ELL parents.

The ethnographic research design was chosen due to the nature of the study. An ethnographic approach helped the researcher to fully understand the challenges of this cultural group in order to uncover more about first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. The researcher used surveys, interviews, and observations to accurately transcribe and solicit the concerns and challenges experienced by Vietnamese immigrant parents during their interactions with American schools and teachers.

### **Definition of Terms**

Castle (2000) defines immigrants as people who left their birth country to seek refuge in another country for an extended amount of time. There are three ways to classify immigrants: where the individual was born (native-born or foreign-born), children of immigrants, and the number of generations the direct ancestors of the individual has lived in the host country (Broomes, 2010). The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2006) report of the 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results identified first-generation immigrants as individuals born outside the host country, and second-generation immigrants as individuals born in the native or host country to immigrant parents.

The study discusses marginal parents when comparing parents of ELL students to dominantly English speaking parents. Marginal parents are immigrants to the United States and speak little to no English (Greder, Brotherson, & Garasky, 2004). Marginal parents are generally not directly involved in school functions and other school events; however, marginal parents should not be defined as uninvolved parents.

### **Assumption, Delimitations, and Limitations**

Most parents of ELL students faced barriers during their interaction with the American school system, due to the differences in language or culture. With the

abundance number of ELL students, specifically Asian students that entered the American school system in the last few decades, it is imperative for American teachers and administration to form positive partnership with these parents. However, little research and strategies have been provided to aid in this process, especially for Vietnamese immigrant parents. The small sample size has a reduced chance of revealing a true effect in this study for the larger population of Vietnamese immigrant parents living in the United States (Buttons, 2013).

Data from the study was collected from a small sample of 10 first-generation and ten second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents that currently live in Texas. This sample size was only a small reflection of Vietnamese immigrant parents in the United States, and could be considered a limitation for this study. Small sample size has a reduced chance of revealing a true effect for this study itself (Buttons, 2013).

The study does portray another limitation with the second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents since some do not have school age children. These parents provided adequate data for the study. Although the second-generation parents did not provide information about challenges with their interaction with the American school system, but they provided information about their worries as their children enter the school system.

### **Chapter 1 Summary**

The study describes challenges and worries of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents to provide schools with information to form positive partnerships with these parents. The study will collect data from a small sample size of Vietnamese immigrant parents from Texas. This small sample size will be one of two limitations for the study. The second limitation is that some second-generation immigrant parents may not yet have children in the school systems; therefore, may not be

able to provide information about challenges in their interactions with the schools. Even with the limitations, the study hopes to shed light into the experiences of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents and the American school system.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

This chapter will review the literature pertaining to parental involvement in general, and more specifically for parents of English Language Learner (ELL) students, along with the challenges and barriers faced by Vietnamese and other Asian parents. Parental involvement has been defined as the interactions of parents with schools and their children to encourage academic success (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The need to understand and effectively communicate with parents of ELL is greater now than ever as the population of immigrants increase in the United States. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) defines ELLs as students that may come from home that speak no English, come from homes that speak only English, or from homes that speak multiple languages (2008). There is not one common definition of ELL students highly complex and heterogeneous group of students. For the purpose of this study, ELL students will be defined as students who come from families that speak little to no English at home.

The high increase in the immigration population meant more ELL students in the American school systems. American educators struggle to find effective strategies to communicate with parents of ELL students. Many researchers have focused on the importance of parental involvement in the academic success of the student and ways for schools to encourage parents to be more active in the school life of their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999). However, little research has been conducted to help schools to involve Asian parents, specifically Vietnamese parents, due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of Asian parents. Several studies indicate barriers such as cultural differences, English



proficiency, lack of knowledge of the American school system, and education level of parents that inhibit the traditional American school and home partnership (Anderson, 1995; Guo, 2009; Li, 2006; Phan, 2004). A deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by Asian, specifically Vietnamese, parents is needed to improve the communication between Asian parents and American schools.

Research shows a positive relationship between parental involvement and the success of students (Wilder, 2014); however, some Vietnamese parents along with other Asian groups challenge the traditional American definition of parental involvement. The present study examines challenges, barriers, and worries faced by first and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents in order to help schools improve communication and partnership with Vietnamese parents. Immigrants are defined as people who left their birth country to seek refuge in another country for an extended amount of time (Castle, 2000). Immigrants are further classified into at least ways: (a) where the individual was born (native-born or foreign-born), (b) children of immigrants, (c) the number of generations the direct ancestors of the individual have lived in the host country (Broomes, 2010). The OECD (2006) report of the 2003 PISA results identified first-generation immigrant, as individuals born outside the host country and second-generation immigrant were individuals born in the host country to immigrant parents.

The review of the research literature related to the topic investigation was organized into four sections: (a) Impact of Asian Demographics on American Schools; (b) Importance of Parental Involvement; (c) Barriers and Perspectives of Asian and ELL parents; and (d) American Schools and Asian-ELL parents.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The growth of diversity in the United States the past few decades has resulted in an increase in non-English speaking parents and children in the American school system. Research indicated the majority of the Asian population are non-English speaking immigrants and unfamiliar with the American school system. Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian population grew by 43.3% with 988,000 of that Asian population being Vietnamese (Esri, 2012; Grieco, 2004). This means more non-English speaking Asian children are entering the American school system (Brown, 2014). The need for schools to involve parents of English Language Learners (ELL) students intensified as the numbers of ELL students are enrolled in the American schools.

Studies reveal the importance of parental involvement in the academic success of a child, with emphasis on the importance of home and school partnerships (Sanders, Epstein & Connors-Tadros, 1999). Researchers have formulated strategies for schools to improve home and school communication such as creating parent groups where parents can obtain information about the school and a form of support group for parents, schools should adopt practices that include components of advocacy, parental efficacy, and relationship building, and schools should offer liaisons that are the sole link between parents and school (Bower & Griffin, 2011). However, research indicated that schools continued to struggle with effective communication with parents of ELL students. Through interviews and surveys, researchers uncovered barriers between ELL parents and schools that resulted in a lack of partnerships between home and school (Li, 2006; Murphy, 2005). In order for schools to improve the communication and partnerships with ELL parents, they must first understand the challenges and struggles that these parents face with the American school system.

Several studies show language and differences in cultural views about education were barriers between ELL parents and the American school system (Li, 2006; Murphy, 2005). Lack of English proficiency could add stress on immigrant parents when they encounter American schools and educators. Some research indicated language and differences between home and school cultural barriers as major challenges; however other barriers may influence the absence of partnership between ELL parents and schools (Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015). Along with language and cultural barriers, Arias and Morello-Campbell (2008) discussed several other barriers such as absence in knowledge about American schools, school-based barriers, and educational history of parents. Unfortunately, the lack of research on the challenges of Asian families, specifically Vietnamese families, has left schools with the lack of understanding about these families. Without this understanding, schools will continue to fight the uphill battle of effective communication with ELL parents while failing to involve ELL parents in academic life of their children.

The purpose of this research was to uncover challenges of Vietnamese parents when dealing with the American school system through the use of interviews with first and second generation Vietnamese Americans. The study uncovered challenges of Vietnamese families in the American school system, while allowing these families to voice their struggles. The independent variable in the study will be first and second generation Vietnamese parents and the dependent variable of the study will be their challenges. The data from the research will help future researchers and schools develop communication strategies for Vietnamese parents and improve home and school partnerships.

## **Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

### **Impact of Asian demographics on American schools.**

In the past two decades, the United States has seen an increase and diversification in the Asian American population. Through quantitative research, Esri (2012) was able to accurately present a comprehensive demographic data of the minority population. Esri used demographic census to provide a comprehensive analysis of the minority population as well as future predictions for each minority group: Hispanics, Asians, and Blacks.

According to Esri (2012), the Asian population grew by 43.3% in the years between 2000 and 2010. The census showed the Asian population was the fastest-growing minority group in the United States and outpaced the growth of the overall United States population by 33.6%. The increase in the Asian population caused an increase in the Asian child population as well, which exceeded the increase in United States population as a whole by more than five times (Esri, 2012). This meant there were approximately 2.8 million Asian children between the ages of 0 and 14 that have or will enter the American school system between the years of 2000 and 2012. The increase in the Asian population meant more non-English speaking Asian children has or will enter the American school system (Brown, 2014).

To fully understand the depth of growth in the Asian population, Brown (2014) provided a comparison between the two fastest-growing minority groups in the United States: Hispanics and Asians. The author used non-experimental research and data by the Census Bureau to provide information about the different reasons for population growth between the two ethnic groups. Brown referenced to the Census Bureau data for the comparison of overall Hispanic population (54 million) and Asian population (19.4 million).

The Hispanic and Asian population has increased in recent decades for different reasons. Hispanic population growth increased in 2012 by 78% due to the high number of births in the United States; however, the 61% of the Asian population growth was mainly fueled by migration (Brown). There are multiple reasons for the Vietnamese migration to the United States over the past four decades. By the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, approximately 125,000 Vietnamese migrated to the United States looking for refuge, which consisted mainly of military personnel and urban educated professionals (Rkasnuam & Batalova, 2014). The next wave to migrate to the United States became known as boat people. Boat people were mainly people from rural areas in Vietnam and were not as educated as the first group of refugees to the United States (Rkasnuam & Batalova, 2014). The last wave of refugees to enter the United States between the 1980s and 1990s were political prisoners and Vietnamese Amerasians. Rkasnuam and Batalova defined Vietnamese Amerasians as children of United States servicemen and Vietnamese mothers.

Another difference between the Hispanic and Asian populations was the percentage of foreign-born adults within each population. In 2012, 74% of Asian adults were foreign born compared to the 22% of foreign-born Hispanic adults (Brown, 2012). There were more Asian adults who resided in America who were born in Asia compared to the number of Hispanics born outside of the United States. Approximately 67% of Vietnamese in the United States was born in Vietnam (Frey, 2014).

These foreign-born Vietnamese adults have children in the American school system and have some kind of interactions with the schools. In 2014, a total of more than 2,000 Asian children enrolled in American elementary schools and approximately 990

Asian children enrolled in American high school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). As the number of Asian children in American school system increases, the need for American schools to involve foreign-born Asian parents intensifies. Some educational researchers would suggest that parental involvement has been the key to student success (Wilder, 2014).

**Importance of parental involvement.** The literature on parental involvement indicates a positive relationship between the involvement of parents in the life and education of the child with the academic success of the child. Studies link parental involvement to positive educational outcomes such as better student behavior in school, greater student motivation to learn, and higher student grades (Griffith, 1998). Parents influence the educational outcomes of their children in three primary mechanisms: modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

By modeling school related appropriate behaviors and attitudes parents influence the educational outcome of their child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). When parents involve themselves in the educational life of their child, they demonstrate to the child that activities related to school are important and worthy of adult time and interest. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) stated:

Modeling theory predicts that children will emulate selected behaviors of adults held in such regard. Thus, when parents spend time with or for their children in relation to school activities, children have opportunities and encouragement to model parents' school-focus attitudes and behaviors. (p. 320)

Parents do this through different ways such as asking about the school day, parent-teacher conferences, or spending homework time with the child. According to Hoover-Dempsey

and Sandler (1995), the presence of parental modeling increases the chances of academic success of a child; however, this alone cannot guarantee the success of a child in school.

Parents provide children with the reinforcement needed to maintain positive behaviors and motivation of the children in school. Through support and direct instruction, parents also influence the educational outcome of a child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). When parents involve themselves in the educational life of their children they often give their children attention, praises, and give their children interest. Positive reinforcements are important to help maintain behaviors of school success for a child, assuming that the reinforcements do not interfere with the role and development of intrinsic motivation (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010).

The emphasis on home-school partnership, which is the collaboration between families and school staff members to enhance the educational success of a student, is greater now than ever according to Auerbach (2009). Auerbach collected data through in-depth interviews with administrators, staff members, and parents. Data were analyzed through a comparative method with two parts. The first part was a comparison within case by topical, theoretical, and in vivo coding. The second part was a comparison with cross case to determine patterns, themes, and discrepancies. School and district leaders needed to actively pursue family engagement because family and school engagements are powerful tools for making schools more equitable and culturally responsive. Griffith (1998) concurred with Auerbach that parental involvement is crucial to the success of students. In his study, Griffith surveyed parents and students who were enrolled in the 122 public elementary schools, which served 130,000 students. The involvement of parents in the school life of their child leads to positive outcomes such as improvement in

student behavior, increase in student want to learn, and better long term academic achievement.

In order for parents to become involved in the educational lives of their children, schools must form partnerships or collaborations with parents. Parental involvement in schools was strongly influenced by the practices of schools to encourage parents to participate in school functions and school decisions (Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999). Sanders, Epstein, and Connors-Tadros (1999) emphasized the importance of home and school partnerships in the academic success of a child. They showed that schools could have more positive partnerships with families through different school programs geared towards parental involvement. Sanders et al. (1999) used surveys and multiple regression analyses to test the effects of the family and student background and measure the schools' different types of family partnership practices. Strong home-school partnerships formed when schools make more efforts to involve parents in different school functions.

New federal policies required every school, district, and state department of education to have active and effective communication with all parents (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, indicated parent involvement as one of the six areas that required reform (Epstein, 2005). The law required schools, districts, and states to have frequent communication with parents about students' achievement and to establish programs for parental involvement. Epstein offered examples from the field through observations and case studies of how schools implement the NCLB of 2001. Along with the NCLB other national initiatives such as



*Project Appleseed* and *National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education* have also advocated for home-school partnership (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008).

In December of 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA) to include provisions to ensure success for students and schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The ESSA recognized the large increase in the number of English learners in the United States, and increased Title III authorization levels and funding. Under this act, states have two options for delaying the inclusion of ELL in accountability systems while they are learning English:

For one year, exclude the student from taking the reading/English language arts test and from counting results of either or both the math and English language arts tests; OR (b) For the first year of the student's enrollment in a U.S. school, report on but exclude from accountability system the results on these tests; for the second year of enrollment, include a measure of student growth on both tests; and for the third year of enrollment, include proficiency on both tests in the accountability system. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)

With the new demands from federal policies, researchers have formulated new strategies to improve home and school communication. Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis (2002) realized that schools and districts still needed "help in developing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships" (p. 14). The authors created a handbook about parent and school collaborations with different strategies for schools to effectively involve parents in the academic life of their child. They included information on the six types of involvement,

provided challenges for schools to meet in order to have excellent partnership programs, and new strategies and tools to help school leaders.

The six types of involvement developed from different studies and each of the involvement types includes practices of home-school partnership (Epstein et al., 2002). The first type of involvement was parenting, which indicates schools should help all families to create a supportive home environment that views children as students. Schools could present families with suggestions for home conditions that would support learning at each level. The authors suggested schools could provide families with workshops or other forms of parent education. Teachers and administrators could visit the homes of students at transition points such as preschool to elementary, middle, and high schools.

Phan (2004) conducted interviews with families of 10 Vietnamese students in order to show how Vietnamese families provided a “structured home learning environment, high academic expectations, attention, love and emotional support, traditional family values, stories of cultural heritage and parental sacrifice, and control of children's social lives” (p. 51). Families in the study reported they provide a supportive home learning environment for their children through everyday routines such as mealtimes, chores, homework time, and educational practices. They believed along with having regular routine and showing their children endless love is another way to support their children in learning. These parents believed through love they would be able to guide their children in school and life.

The second type of involvement has to do with the ways schools communicate families. Schools communicate with families and means for families to communicate

with the school about the progress of their children and school programs (Epstein et al., 2002). According to Gestwicki (2015), teachers could form positive relationships with parents through parent conferences throughout the year about the progress of their children in the classroom. The use of weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home to parents would be another way schools could keep the line of communication with parents. The authors also suggested schools to employ language translators to help families as needed to enhance communication with ELL parents.

According to Epstein et al. (2002), parent volunteering at school functions is the third type of involvement. Schools could recruit parents to help and support teachers, administrators, and students in the school or classroom. Teachers should ask for parent volunteers to be class parents and provide all parents with a phone tree as ways to provide families with needed information.

Epstein et al. (2002) further identified learning at home as the fourth type of involvement for comprehensive programs of partnership. Along with helping families to establish a home environment that supports the child as a student, schools should also provide information about how to help students with homework and other school related activities. Teachers could provide families with information on homework policies and ways to help students improve skills on school assessments. Epstein et al. redefined learning at home to include definitions of what helping at home means. It means to encourage, listen, praise, guide, monitor, and discuss with the child about schoolwork not to teach the school subjects.

The fifth type of involvement helps parents to become leaders in decision-making matters in a progress of partnership and shared views toward shared goals (Epstein et al.,

2002). Decision-making does not mean a power struggle between conflicting ideas. In order to do so, schools could include parent learners from all racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic groups within the school and offer trainings to enable these leaders to serve as representatives of other families. Decision-making should also include students along with parents and understand that students have rights that are protected.

The last type of involvement identifies and integrates resources and services from the community (Epstein et al., 2002). Collaboration with the community strengthens school programs, family practices, and student development. Schools could provide families with information on community health, cultural, social support, and recreational services. Epstein et al (2002) defined community as neighborhoods outside of where the students live and go to school that influence the learning and development of students. Communities in this instance mean all who are interested in the quality of education.

The framework of six major types of involvement aids educators and schools to develop more comprehensive programs for home-school partnership, and it also helps researchers to improve future practices (Epstein, 1992; Epstein & Connors, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). The six types of involvement provide schools with different choices about which practices will best help achieve the specific goals for that school (Epstein et al., 2002). The programs at each school look different as each school tailors their own practices for the six types of involvement to meet the needs of the students and families.

**Barriers and perspectives of Asian and ELL parents.** Previous research discovered parents from different cultures show interest in being involved in the education of their children (Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990); however, certain barriers have led to the lack of involvement for ELL parents in American schools. ELL parents are described as marginal parents because of their race, class, immigrant status, language proficiency, and level of education (Hudak, 1993). Marginal parents have been defined as parents who are immigrants to the United States and speak little to no English (Greder, Brotherson & Garasky, 2004). Although marginalized parents have limited experiences with the American school system and/or have negative experiences with different school organization, this does not mean that marginal parents are less concerned about the education of their children. Marginal parents should not be identified as uninvolved in the educational lives of their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997).

Unfortunately, to American educators, parents and families that are not involved in the traditional way may be judged as unconcerned or not caring. Marginal parents involve themselves in unconventional ways that differ from the expectations of American schools and educators (Moles, 1993). American education arena only recognizes a few of many ways marginal parents stay involved in the educational lives of their children. According to Lopez (2001),

These marginalized forms of parent involvement not only challenge the rigidity of traditional involvement, but also reveal a counter-story of involvement, a story that has been suppressed by and excluded from the academic literature (p. 418).

Lopez (2001) chose a qualitative research methodology in order to obtain a full perspective of how marginalized parents define the concept of involvement for them. A sample of five immigrant families residing in Texas was selected for the study. Out of the five families chosen, the Padillas family was the most uninvolved family in the education of their children as seen through the normative American lens (Lopez, 2001). However, a closer examination of the family revealed the values of parental involvement was unconventional, much like the other marginal parents. The Padillas family, valued hard work and chose to focus, model, and teach their children this value as their way of being involved. Lopez (2001) concluded that as schools enter the 21st century, they can no longer rely on a “one-size fits-all” approach to parental involvement (p. 434). The increase in diverse student population has forced American schools to establish new and innovative ways to effectively promote home-school partnerships with marginal and ELL parents.

In their study, Arias and Morello-Campbell (2008) sought to discover how schools reached out to their marginal parents through ethnographic research. Creswell (2012) defined ethnographic research as a study that focuses on the behaviors, values, beliefs and language of an entire culture or group. Arias and Morello-Campbell (2008) stated the barriers that may confront ELL parents with regards to the engagement with the American schools as language barriers, educational history of parents, absence in knowledge about American schools, differences between school and home cultures, and school-based barriers (Arias & Morello-Campbell).

Lack of English language proficiency continues to be one of the most significant barriers for effective home-school partnership (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). Parents of

ELL students cannot effectively participate in school activities, help their child with English written schoolwork, and express their concerns to the teachers without proficient English. Arias and Morello-Campbell (2009) stated,

All written materials sent out to parents should be in the home language and English, bilingual staff should be available to speak with parents when they come to school, and interpreters should be provided at meetings and events. Native language training should be available for teachers and ESL training for parents.  
(p. 10)

This research supports the point that language should not be a barrier to have successful collaboration between parents and school.

Another challenge when schools try to establish home-school partnership with ELL parents is the educational level of ELL parents. It is common for ELL parents not to have formal education or exposure to school, and often parents see this limitation as a source of embarrassment (Floyd, 1998). For these parents, the feeling embarrassment could initiate a sense of intimidation with teachers, administrators, and school staff members. The intimidation shuns ELL parents from being as involved in school functions, discussions, and even parent-teacher conferences.

Lack of knowledge about the American school system and how parents are usually involved in the United States presents another barrier. Parental involvement in American schools involves practices such as bake sales, parent-teacher organization, and volunteering at school events, and expands to activities accomplished in the home to support classroom instructions (Lopez, 2001). For parents who fit the American definition of parental involvement, they must first acquire prior knowledge about the

requirements and socially sanctioned ways of the American schools. The parents also need to have a willingness to perform these tasks and have opportunities to familiarize themselves with these specific practices (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Some parents may see some parental involvement activities, such as being directly involved in school instruction, as not acceptable because they are not education professionals.

The difference between school and home cultures remains a barrier between ELL parents and American schools. As discussed in Guo (2009), the perception and expectations of ELL parents may differ from American teachers. ELL parents have different views of the roles that parents and teachers have in the educational life of the students. Many ELL parents perceive their role as nurturing and instilling good behaviors. Some parents saw their involvement at home consists of reading, cooking, and discussing about the school day (Lee & Brown, 2006). They often leave the responsibility of tasks related to actual learning to the professionals at school, while American teachers assume that parents will help with school tasks at home (Valdés, 1996).

The final barrier, school-based barriers, includes negative school climate and deficit perspective of the staff members toward ELL parents (Arias & Morello-Campbell, 2008). How a person or group defines parent involvement depends on the relationship between school staff members and parents. Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) identified three types of home and school relationships: “top-down (school-centered), bottom-up (parent-centered), or collaborative” (p. 38). Staff members in schools that have a top-down approach to parental involvement tend to think the responsibility rests upon parents to initiate communication, rather than a collaborative responsibility of



school-home community. The second approach centers on what school staff members could do to involve parents in school activities. According to Bermudez (1994), activities to the school-centered approach often focused on the issues related to classroom instruction and student success. The relationship that schools need to develop a positive relationship with ELL parents rests upon the third approach. In an open collaboration parents and teachers work together to form relationships and create a strong structure for exchanging information (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999).

Unfortunately some schools often use traditional efforts of parental involvement towards ELL parents, which usually focuses on what parents could do in order to be more involved. This approach proved ineffective towards marginal and ELL parents; and school staff members needed to look at other ways to effectively involve ELL parents (Arias & Morello-Campbell, 2008). This may include requiring/asking American teachers to acquire more knowledge about the Asian culture. Asian American parents challenge the traditional definition of parental involvement used by educators in the United States. Asian parents do not directly involve themselves with the schools as parents from other ethnic backgrounds (Chao, 2000). The strategies for parental involvement of Asian parents differ from the typical American ways of parental involvement because they are more involved in practices at home.

Asian parents focus on two strategies shaped by the Asian culture: (a) respect for authority and (b) value for education (Sy, 2006). To some Asian parents, such as Vietnamese and Chinese parents, the authority figures are teachers and school administrators are the authority figures and parents respect them enough to separate parent and teacher responsibilities (Chan & Lee, 2004; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003).

Parents who hold such beliefs may consider participation in school activities as inappropriate. Some Vietnamese parents find that collaboration between schools and home undermine their belief and values (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2004). To these parents, their role for parental involvement mainly resides at home to plan for and make sure schoolwork is completed.

Fullan (1991) stated someone or a group need to advocate for change in order to bring about change in a certain setting. To alleviate negative school climate towards ELL parents, school staff members need to take the first step to change. Schools could create a warm, caring and inviting environment for parents in order to increase parental involvement (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). An environment that alienates parents, in which teachers and others in the learning community do not make an effort to communicate with parents, results in low parental involvement school events. Schools with a welcoming climate tend to have positive attitudes from the staff members toward the community, pays attention to detail that allow parental accessibility to the school, and supports and encourages teachers to have contacts with parents on a regular basis (Arias & Morello-Campbell, 2008).

Arias and Morello-Campbell (2008) suggested schools would receive more positive outcomes if they focus on what schools could do to involve ELL parents instead of the other way around. The authors provided strategies that successful schools used to minimize these barriers. They suggested eliminating the communication barriers in schools through liaisons, initiate teacher home visits, and distribute bilingual newsletters. Schools with success in communication with ELL parents have also acknowledged the culture and values of the parents and incorporate community into curriculum. These

schools have also modified meetings to accommodate the work schedule of parents and arrange transportation to facilitate student involvement in activities at school. The suggested strategies are often meant to affect the general ELL parent population and were not specific to Vietnamese parents or any Asian population.

**American schools and Asian-ELL parents.** Even with the new parental involvement research and strategies of educational researchers, American schools continue to struggle to increase parental involvement with minority students. Through their interviews and observations of the 347 students at Hawk Elementary, Bower and Griffin (2011) stated administrators, teachers, and school staff members struggle to have home-school partnership with minority parents. This struggle is mainly due to the lack of knowledge and understanding about minority and ELL parents. The need to establish meaningful communication between teachers and parents of ELL students intensifies with the increase in diversity of Asian children with foreign-born parents in the American school system.

Research shows that some new teachers are not prepared to work effectively with parents from different cultural backgrounds. Guo (2009) used qualitative data collection and analysis to reach the conclusion that due to the limited ability to establish a partnership between parents of ELL students and schools, students in Canada experienced high failure rates. The study was conducted in three annual ESL Parents' Night events at in a secondary school west side of Vancouver, British Columbia. Shuck (2013) defined the term ESL as an acronym for English as a Second Language and often referred to the program at schools rather than to the actual students. Guo collected data over a period of three years through natural observations and interviews of nine ESL teaches, six bilingual

assistants, students in the ESL program who gave oral presentations and their parents. The observations focused on how ESL teachers planned for and made their presentation at the ESL Parents' Night events. The author also observed how parents asked their questions and how the teachers answered the questions.

There were three themes in the study: (a) teachers' purposes for Parents' Night; (b) parents' reflection on the student oral presentations; and (c) differences between new and experienced parents in their reactions to Parents' Night (Guo, 2009). Teachers saw the purpose of the Parents' Night was to educate parents and students about the ESL program and how it differs from schools in Hong Kong and Taiwan, as the majority of students in the ESL program were Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan. An interviewed teacher gave a comparison between instructional methods in Hong Kong and Taiwan versus Canadian instruction. She stated in Hong Kong and Taiwan the primary mode of instruction was rote learning and demanding teachers motivates students by regular testing. The Canadian teachers have more of a lenient approach based on developing thinking skills and creativity (Guo, 2009).

Parents at the event expressed four points of dissatisfaction with the presentation given by students. The parents did not like the message of privacy because in Chinese traditions, parents did not need to knock on the door before entering a room because all parties own the house. Secondly, parents did not like how the students were talking to their parents. Thirdly, parents did not want to hear the students present but rather teachers to inform them about the program (Guo, 2009). Chinese-Canadian parents focus on the written ability of their children over reading skills. The fourth dissatisfaction was because the students mainly demonstrated their oral competency and not their writing

abilities through the presentation. This dissatisfaction with Parents' Night highlighted the educational differences between school and home culture and the roles of parents in each culture.

A study conducted by Jim Anderson (1995) focused on cross-cultural perspective of parents about learning to read and write through interviews. The sample for the study included 10 parents from three different cultural groups in Canada: (a) Chinese-Canadian; (b) Euro-Canadian; and (c) Indo-Canadian. The sample was from parents of students in grades kindergarten, first, and second grade in three different elementary schools. The results of the study indicated that Chinese-Canadian parents were mostly concerned with basic literacy skills such as form and performance over literacy activities such as shared reading with their child (Anderson, 1995).

Although the studies of Guo (2009) and Anderson (1995) concentrated on Chinese-Canadian students and parents, literature expressed the limited ability of American schools to effectively communicate with and have partnership with ELL parents. Li (2006) studied the perspectives of middle-class Chinese immigrant parents on the issues of literacy learning, homework, and school-home communication. The data was collected through a comprehensive questionnaire of 26 immigrant parents from Mainland China. The questionnaires were distributed to 60 Mandarin-speaking Chinese families; however, only 26 parents completed the survey. The bilingual questionnaire had six parts: (1) General Information; (2) Perceptions of Child's Reading; (3) Perceptions of Child's Writing; (4) Perception of Child's Math; (5) Perception of Child's Homework; (6) Communication with School.

The general information section of the questionnaire consisted of 20 questions with regards to the general demographic information of the families such as duration of stay in America, language spoken and used at home, and their educational and occupational backgrounds (Li, 2006). According to the survey, the average length of stay in the United States for the parents was 10 years, and all 26 families had dual-language parents. Of the 26 families, only 30.8% spoke only Chinese and 69.2% spoke both Chinese and English at home. Most parents came from highly educated backgrounds and 70% were in white-collar professional jobs.

The section about the perception of parents about the reading of their child consisted of seven questions about beliefs on the reading process, ten questions on reading practices of the child at home, and seven questions on parental involvement in the reading process (Li, 2006). The results revealed that all parents believed in the importance of their child reading outside of school and place high emphasis on the reading development of their child. Chinese parents believed students needed immediate corrections when reading errors were made. In fact, 62% of the families reported that immediate correction of errors was important to the reading development of their child (Li). Past research indicated that Chinese parents value the rereading and recitation strategies (Anderson, 1995; Huntsinger, Jose, & Larson, 1998; Li, 2002); however, only 30.8% of the parents specified that they actually asked their children to practice rereading that same story (Li, 2006).

All 26 families placed importance on their children to write outside of school, and 75% of Chinese children were involved in some type of English writing activities at home (Li, 2006). The perspective of Chinese parents on writing aligned with their

approach to literacy, which placed great emphasis on well-formed and grammatically correct sentences (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Chinese parents in the study were consistent between their perception of the writing behavior and how involved they are with the writing of their children at home (Li, 2006). However, the perspective of Chinese parents does not agree with mathematics in the American mainstream schools even though the children excel in math (Huntsinger et al., 1998; Huntsinger, Jose, Larson, Krieg, & Shaligram, 2000; Li, 2002).

Only 26.9% of the parents in the study approved of math instructions in, and 50% stated they did not approve of the way math was taught mainstream American schools (Li, 2006). The response of the parents indicated that 37.5% preferred the drills and practice way of teaching math. Due to the dissatisfaction with mathematics education in American schools, some parents stated they would buy workbooks and assigned additional work for the children. Parents in the study were split on their perception of the amount of homework (Li, 2006). About 42% of the parents thought that homework was enough for their children; however, 46.2% stated that the amount of homework was too little.

According to past research, Chinese immigrant parents lack familiarity with American mainstream schools and not as involved in school context (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Li, 2004). Parents in the study were asked how familiar they were with the school instruction in math, writing, and reading (Li, 2006). The majority (60%) of the parents stated that they were familiar with reading instruction, 34.6% were familiar with writing and math instructions. Most of the parents attended parent–teacher conferences and felt comfortable talking to teachers about the progress of their child;

however they were not active in communicating with teachers on a regular basis, volunteer at school functions, and attend PTO meetings. Schools that have a high ELL student population face challenges effectively communicating with parents due to certain barriers such as language, education level of parents, and cultural differences of parents' understanding of their role in the educational process of their children (Arias & Morello-Campbell, 2008).

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

**Impact of Asian demographics on American schools.** A couple of methodological issues in their research and collection of data were identified by Esri (2012). A largely diversified Asian population presented the researchers with a significant challenge. They were not able to evaluate the specific population of each group; however, Esri did include the names of each group as Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Thais, Filipinos, Koreans, Vietnamese, and more.

Brown (2014) also identified the largely diversification of the Asian population presented some issues in the methodology. The article did not list the specific groups in the Asian or Hispanic population. Since the author used different sources for data, Brown took into account that different sources might provide slightly different statistics.

Unlike Esri (2012) and Brown (2014), Grieco (2004) focused the study on the Vietnamese population in the United States. The study used data from the Census of 2000 to show the number and percentage of Vietnamese immigrants in the United States by states. Other than data collected from the Census 2000, the author did not indicate any other methods for verify the statistics. In the study, Grieco did not provide specific data on first and second generation of immigrants from Vietnam.



**Importance of parental involvement.** Through qualitative data collection, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) provided a model of how parents become involved in the educational lives of their children through modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. The study used previous research to build a theoretical model for parental involvement. The authors believed that the causal variables used in the study relates to most parents but does not indicate specific ethnicities. An exception to the presented model of parental involvement would be the circumstances of the parents to create high sociodemographic risk for poor outcomes, such as a combination of low education, low income, marital status of the parents, and poor health (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). With the use of such causal variables, the study also does not specifically address the Asians immigrant parents.

Auerbach (2009) points out the importance of school leaders to increase connection with family and community to make schools more collaborative, more equitable, and culturally responsive. Data focused on the role of school administrators to promote activities that would enhance such partnership with families and communities. The qualitative study portrayed four schools that were notable for their proactive approach to engage family and the community. The study mainly concentrated on educational equity for Latino families and does not speak of other minority groups within the study.

**Barriers and perspectives of Asian and ELL parents. Lopez (2001)**

purposefully selected the five families to interview and observed for the study to represent how families from other cultures interpret the concept of involvement. These families reside in the Texas Rio Grande Valley and were recommended by school personnel. The author used sixteen unstructured observation in the study to collect data in a more open-ended and free flowing method (Patton, 1990). Although this method makes it possible for the observer to see the family in their natural environment, it may present a problem with authenticity. The participants may act differently from normal behaviors when the observer in the home even though the participants may agree to presence of the observer (Priest & Roberts, 2010).

Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) also used qualitative research in their study of promoting the involvement of ELL parents. The authors studied a group of ELL parents in different schools to provide an explanation of how schools can form effective partnership with marginalized parents and communities. The study uses past literature and case studies as foundation for the analysis and recommendations of effective parental involvement for ELL parents. Although the study seemed to be a qualitative research, the author neglected to clear state the methodology used in the study.

**American schools and Asian-ELL parents.** To collect data on the operational of parental involvement at Hawk Elementary, Bower and Griffin (2011) used a microethnographic research. Microethnographic study allows the research to explicitly focus on one part of a larger belief system in a culture (Creswell, 2008). Since Bower and Griffin conducted their study in only one elementary school, so the suggestions about parental involvement cannot be generalized to other schools. Due to the limited involvement of parents at Hawk Elementary, the administrator at the school asked the authors to not conduct formal interviews with the parents; therefore, the study had limited parent voices.

Guo (2009) had similar methodological issues at Bower and Griffin (2011) in that the study was conducted at one school and this provided for a small sample size. The small sample size limits a study because it might have less of a chance to detect a true effect for the study. According to Buttons (2013), “A study with low statistical power has a reduced chance of detecting a true effect, but it is less well appreciated that low power also reduces the likelihood that a statistically significant result reflects a true effect” (p. 365). Another issue Guo had was the lack of opportunities for parents to interact at Parents’ Night, and without the interaction of parents it is harder to see the communication differences between the teachers and parents (Taylor, 1997).

Similar to the other two studies, Li (2006) encountered a small sample size for the study as well. The study included mainly of well-educated, middle-class Chinese immigrant parents; therefore, the study could not be used generalized other populations. The research also used only one method of surveys to collect data. By using only one method, the study is left to encounter errors such as bias and variability, which can affect

the accuracy of the inferences (Fowler, 2013). The author does note that the use of follow-up interviews would have strengthened the design of the study.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

Esri (2012) studied the changes in population of several minority groups in the United States to profile customers, analyze markets, evaluate competitors, and identify opportunities for people in the United States. While Brown (2014) studied the reasons for population growth in the two fastest growing minority groups in America, Hispanics and Asians. Although Esri and Brown had different purposes for their study, both analyzed the changes in population size for minority groups such as Hispanics and Asians. Both studies had the same conclusion that the Hispanics and Asian population have increased in the last two decades.

With the increase in the population size of minority groups such as Hispanics and Asians, there has been an increase in the need for schools to have effective strategies to reach out to minority and ELL parents. Studies from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), Auerbach (2009), and Griffith (1998) showed a strong positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. In their different approaches to identify effective strategies for schools to promote a stronger home-school partnership, these authors agree that parental involvement of is crucial to the success of students.

The study of Epstein et al. (2002) defined six types of parental involvement that schools should meet in order to obtain effective partnership programs with parents; however, this study does not specify how this would look like for Vietnamese parents. Some Vietnamese families provide a supportive and structured learning environment at home by providing their children with a structured routine and endless love Phan (2004). The study showed a different interpretation of parental involvement through the

perspectives of Vietnamese parents. Vietnamese parents in the study did not belong to any type of school parent organizations, visited the schools, or communicated with the teachers due to language and cultural barriers.

Similar to the study of Phan (2004), Lopez (2001) conducted interviews with Hispanic families to show how these parents redefine the traditional description of parental involvement. These Hispanic parents, like the Vietnamese parents in the study of Phan, are not as involved in the activities and functions of the school; however, they provide a supportive environment at home by teaching their children the value of hard work. “The traditional family values harmony, filial piety, mutual obligation, hard work, obedience, and discipline” (Phan, 2004, p. 56). Cultural and other barriers such as language, school-base, absence in knowledge about American schools, and the educational history of parents remain obstacles for American educators in their effort to form effective partnerships with Vietnamese and other ELL parents. To better communicate with Asian parents, Guo (2009) and Li (2006) studied the perspectives of Chinese parents about the schools their children attend. Guo conducted interviews and observations of Chinese-Canadian parents and ESL teachers, while Li interviewed Chinese parents in the United States. Even though the settings for the studies were different, the two researchers came to similar conclusions regarding the perspectives of Chinese parents and the education of their children. Both stated that Chinese parents focus more on the written ability of their children, and both studies show a difference between school and home cultures.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

Research showed the importance of parental involvement in the academic success of students (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014); however, there is an absence of discussion

about Asian parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler addressed the three mechanisms of parental involvement: (a) modeling; (b) reinforcement; and (c) direct instruction in a more general context but does not go into detail of how these mechanisms would look like for Asian parents.

Epstein et al. (2002) discussed six types of parental involvements as: (a) Parenting; (b) Communicating; (c) Volunteering; (d) Learning at Home; (e) Decision Making; and (f) Collaborating with the Community. Although the authors went into much detail to define each of the types and sample practices of these involvements in schools, they did not indicated how schools could apply it to Asian parents. The sample practices of the six involvement types were suggested for general application for all parents of all ethnicities.

Asian parents do not fit the traditional definition of parental involvement in America. Due to the cultural differences, Asian parents view parental involvement differently and not as direct as parents of other ethnic groups do (Chao, 1996; 2000; Huntsinger, Jose, Liaw, & Ching, 1997; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Shoho, 1994). Specifically Vietnamese parents tend to be more indirect in the educational lives of their children providing more structural home environment to support learning (Phan, 2004).

Previous literature showed different barriers faced by ELL parents in general and more specifically Asian parents such as language, cultural, and lack of knowledge about American schools (Arias & Morello-Campbell, 2008; and Guo, 2009; Lopez, 2001). The research of Arias and Morello-Campbell discussed these barriers and offer suggestions for schools to help parents of ELL students overcome these barriers; however, they were

not specific to the ethnicity of the ELL parents nor mention how these suggestions could vary with the different ethnic groups.

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

The United States has increased the minority population in the past few decades, especially in the Asian population. Most of the Asian population growth, specifically Vietnamese population, was fueled by migration (Brown, 2014). Vietnamese immigrants came to the United States in three waves: (a) Military personnel and urban educated professionals; (b) Boat people; and (c) Political prisoners and Vietnamese Amerasians (Rkasnuam & Batalova, 2014). The increase in minority population brought about a rise in diversity in American schools. Collaboration between ELL parents and schools became a crucial part in the academic success of ELL students.

Partnership between ELL parents and schools contributes to the significantly to the success of minority students in school (Espinosa, 1995). Even though previous literature have associated parental involvement with a positive connection to the academic success of students, American schools struggle to form effective communication and partnership with parents of ELL students (Gonzalez, 2002). Barriers and challenges prevent ELL parents from being directly involved in the school life of their children. Cultural, linguistic, and other barriers hinder ELL parent involvement in general, and more specifically Asian parents (Anderson, 1995; Guo, 2009; Li, 2006; Phan, 2004). If school administrators and teachers want more direct involvement from ELL parents then they need to understand and appreciate the beliefs of culturally and linguistically diverse parents along with their challenges with the American school system (Wandersman et al., 2002).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction to Chapter 3**

This chapter outlines techniques and methods used in this ethnographic study of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents and their encounters with the American school system. The review of the research literature showed a positive correlation between parental involvement and student academic achievement (Sanders, Epstein & Connors-Tadros, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). These findings have held across economic levels of parents and ethnicities. However, Asian parents have defied the traditional definition of parental involvement in the United States. The involvement of Asian parents has been indirect to the educational life of their children, as they provide more home structure versus active involvement in school functions and collaboration with teachers. Along with different perspectives of parental involvement, other barriers such as linguistic and lack of knowledge about American schools have caused Asian parents to distant themselves from the American schools. Schools should have a greater understanding of these challenges and worries of Vietnamese parents in order to increase the collaboration with Vietnamese parents.

This study used an ethnographic research design in order to understand the challenges and worries faced by first and second generation Vietnamese immigrants. Ethnographic study is a qualitative research that focuses on an entire cultural group (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The study took a realist ethnography approach and narrated what was heard from the Vietnamese immigrant parents in a third-person voice. To do so, interviews with both first- and second generation parents were conducted in the state of Texas.



This chapter explains the purpose of the study and research questions. It also details how the study was conducted, the choice of the design, procedures, and the measures to collect data. The methodology chapter outlines how variables were identified and process of data collections to provide a guide for future research.

### **Research Questions**

In guiding the design of this study, three questions have been posed:

1. What can Vietnamese parents tell about their challenges and worries with the American school system?
2. How do the challenges of first-generation Vietnamese parents differ from second-generation Vietnamese parents in the United States?
3. How do the challenges faced by Vietnamese parents when they interact with American schools and educators affect their parental involvement?

### **Purpose and Design of Study**

The purpose of the study was to articulate the struggles and worries with American schools and educators of Vietnamese immigrant parents. Additionally, the study sought to find how the barriers between Vietnamese immigrant parents and American schools affect parental involvement. The study also depicted differences between the challenges of first and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. The difference in concerns of these two generations will help educators to vary their strategies to increase parental involvement.

An ethnographic research design was chosen due to the nature of the study. The purpose of the study was to learn more about the cultural group of Vietnamese immigrant parents through their experiences with the American school system. It was crucial for the researcher to be immersed within the group in order to fully understand the challenges

and barriers between this cultural group and the American schools. Through interviews, surveys, and observations the researcher was able to accurately articulate and transcribe the experiences of these parents when they interacted with American schools, administrators, teachers, and other staff members.

The study advanced through two stages over the course of approximately six months. The first stage was a semi-structured interview with first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents in the state of Texas. Semi-structured interviews meant the researcher knows what he or she wants to find out about and have a set of questions to ask; however, the conversation was free to change (Fylan, 2005). All questions were pre-written and used to guide the interviews with Vietnamese immigrant parents from Texas.

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

The population for stage one and two of the study was first and second-generation parents from the state of Texas who emigrated from Vietnam to the United States. The first generation of immigrant Vietnamese parents all have at least one child that has gone through the American school system. Approximately 80% of this set of parents has immigrated to the United States between 1970 and 1980 from Vietnam by boat. Most of these parents are widely known as boat people because they were the first group of refugees to the United States (Rkasnuam & Batalova, 2014). The 20% of the population for the stage one are refugees that entered the United States between the 1980s and 1990s. This group of parents was mostly political prisoners or children of United States servicemen and Vietnamese mothers.

The second stage consists of second-generation parents who were children of first-generation immigrant parents to the United States. This set of parents were either born in Vietnam but grew up in the United States or born in the United States.

Approximately half of the population in this stage was second-generation Vietnamese parents that were born in Vietnam, and the other half of the population were born in the United States.

The objectives and characteristics of the study determined how and which people to select as part of the sample population for the study. The population of this study was a purposive sample, which was one of the most commonly sampling strategies for qualitative research (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The participants in this study were preselected according to the criteria relevant to the research questions. The research questions set in this study required participants who were first or second-generation Vietnamese immigrants to the United States with at least one child in the American school system.

### **Instrumentation**

**Interview.** The data for this research were collected through an interviewer-completed instrument instead of a self-completed questionnaire, in which the respondents wrote their answers. Interviews meant systematically talking to and attentively listening to an individual through conversation (Kajornboon, 2005). The interviews in this study were done face to face and in Vietnamese, which was the native language of the sample population. With permission from participants, the interviews were recorded as well as written to ensure a complete collection of the data including tone and feelings of the participants. If the participants refused to be recorded, then the researcher transcribed the facial expression and tone as comments beside each question.

The interview questions were set up as three parts—general information about immigration status, challenges with American schools, and their effect on parental involvement in schools. The purpose of this instrument was to gather data regarding the

adversity faced by Vietnamese immigrant parents when interacting with American schools. The data provided numerous challenges, worries, and feelings of Vietnamese immigrant parents when they interacted with a school system that is foreign to them. The data also provided information of how the challenges may or may not affect participants' parental involvement status at school functions.

**Questionnaire.** Along with the interviews, participants were given a questionnaire to fill out individually. The questionnaire comprised of specific questions about the background of the participants and open-ended questions. Participants were asked to answer questions according to their experience with and knowledge of the American school system. Each section on the questionnaire was assessed and categorized according to themes. The report was useful to evaluate the opinions of the participants on the subject of their interactions with the American school system based on their responses on the questionnaire.

### **Data Collection**

The participants completed semi-structured interviews concerning the different challenges they may have faced with the American school system with regards to the different barriers such as language, cultural, educational values, and knowledge of American schools. The interviews were composed of open-ended questions, which were analyzed by coding procedures to classify patterns into specific themes. During interviews, the participants discussed and fully explained their perceptions of the challenges with the American schools and educators.

A Daily Interpretive Analysis (DIA) was done at the end of every interview day. The DIA provided a summary and interpretation of the information obtained by all the interviews of that day. Since the data collected were recorded and hand-written notes, it

provides an informational base that was fragile because as time passes the data becomes increasingly hard to reconstruct the information. There were instances of insights that one may have during the interview that may be hard to remember after a few days; therefore, one may not have the full interpretation of the interview.

### **Identification of Attributes**

This ethnographic research sought to understand challenges and worries faced by first and second generation Vietnamese immigrants with the American school system. In this study, first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents were defined as parents born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States for political reasons. Second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents were defined as individuals born to immigrant parents in the United States or came over to America with their immigrant parents. The challenges of these parents varied according to their experience with the American school system.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

**Qualitative.** This study was an ethnographic research; the study was based on what people of certain groups think, feel, and believe. The study sought to understand the challenges and difficulties of Vietnamese immigrant parents, and how these barriers have affected parental involvement within this culture of parents. The study was completed in phases with a combination of analytical methods as needed. Data were collected through the use of one-on-one interviews and surveys from first- and second-generation Vietnamese parents.

The interviews were transcribed and recorded to fully understand the feelings of each parent that otherwise cannot be described through just field notes. The interview questions were sorted by three themes: demographics, challenges of the parents, and how this has or has not affected parental involvement. The initial participant interviews were

semi-structured using a series of directive and non-directive questions to stimulate in-depth responses from the participants. The setting for the interviews was informal and varied according to the convenience of the participants. The interviews were conducted in the native language of the parents, Vietnamese. After each interview, the responses were translated into English to easily categorized into specific categories and themes.

Data analysis based on coding and categorization breaks down the data into small pieces of information (Creswell, 1994). Using the practices of coding and analysis of Creswell, data was broken into two levels of analysis. The first level was open coding, which broke down the data in order to generate conceptual categories. The participants gave some data in the study in story form; therefore, coding was carefully done in order to maintain the whole substance of the narrative. In these instances, data was written down as phrases and quotes from the participants and organized into each category.

The next level was to compare the data for similarities and differences between the two generations. Comparing is an important part in identifying concepts and coding (Creswell, 1994). Comparison is essential to conceptual develop of the analysis of qualitative data. More abstract concepts were developed through the comparison of data between the two generations such as how home-school partnership has progressed throughout the years and where can schools improve upon next.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

The data only reflected interviews from first and second-generation Vietnamese-immigrant parents in a city in Texas. This was a small sample size of the Vietnamese-immigrant parents in the United States. The small sample size was a limitation for this study because a small sample size might have less of a chance to detect a true effect for

the study. According to Hackshaw (2008), the two problems with small sample size studies are interpretation of results and that it can produce false-positive results.

Another limitation for this study has to do with the second-generations of Vietnamese-immigrant parents. Since the group in Texas consisted of some parents who do not have school age students, these parents may not have yet faced challenges with the school system at the time the study took place. They may not have been able to fully provide adequate data for study; however, some of these parents may have had certain worries about their children entering the American school system.

## **Validation**

**Credibility.** The methodology of this study was developed through the review of existing literature of qualitative research. The procedures and analysis of the study were based on ethnographic study research techniques to fully understand the experiences of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents with the American school system. The population sample was selected with purpose for the ethnographic study and represents parents of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. The techniques and population sampling of the research provided credibility to this study.

**Dependability.** The reliability of this research rested upon three elements: time engaged with participants, member checking, and triangulation. As the purpose of an ethnographic study was to provide details about certain groups or culture, the participants were given sufficient time during the interview to fully answer and explain their experiences with the American school system. Along with ample time during the interviews, the participants have read the transcript of the interview to make sure the transcripts were accurate to their experience and words. This provided accuracy during the translation and analysis of the data.

The study allowed for data collection through three different sources. Interview with the participants was one of sources; however, the participants were given a questionnaire to answer on their own time as another source of data collection for the study. Observation of how the participants act during the interview and their interaction with their children were documented as another source to gather data.

## **Expected Findings**

Each portion of the interview revealed results that were important concerning different aspects of the study. The first part of the interview and survey identified the



demographics of the sample population. This portion helped to identify the population and history of the families leading to their departure of Vietnam to adopt a new country as their home. The knowledge gained from this section led to a deeper understanding of the values of education held by each family, and how it presented a challenge for the parents during school-sponsored educational activities.

The second and third section of the interview and survey displayed different challenges and obstacles faced by each parent during their collaboration with the school and teachers. The two sections disclosed information about the views of parental involvement from Vietnamese parents and if involvement was affected by the different challenges and difficulties of the parents and their interaction with the schools.

### **Ethical Issues**

**Conflict of interest assessment.** The purpose of this ethnographic study was to understand of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents and their experiences with the American school system. The data collected from the study assisted school administrators and staff to enhance their communication and collaboration with Vietnamese parents.

The connection between researcher and participants might pose as a conflict of interest to the study. Some of the participants were family friends and others were family, which may present bias during the interview process. The questions were authentic and free of bias; however, some participants may have felt a need to give certain answers to each question in order for the research to have specific results. Each participant was given an informed consent form that advised him or her about the purpose of the research. The participants were notified that the purpose of the study was to learn

about their experiences with the American school system and teachers also if these experiences have influenced their parental involvement.

**Researcher Position.** Academic success of students depended essentially on parental involvement. Parents from different cultures view parental involvement differently; therefore, they were given the term *marginal parents* (Hudak, 1993). Marginal parents may seem not as involved in the education of their children by American definition of parental involvement; however, this was further from the truth because marginal parents are involved in the education of their children just in ways that differs from the American definition of involvement. Marginal parents sometimes felt disconnected with the American school system due to language proficiency, difference in educational values, or other barriers.

Based on the findings of the literature review, it is evident that more research is needed for American schools to have a deeper understanding of and gain more knowledge about marginal parents in general and immigrant parents specifically. Thousands of children from immigrant parents enter the American school system yearly, it is crucial now to connect and form collaborations with these families. Vietnamese immigrants were a small group of minority that entered the United States since the early 1970s. The present study examined challenges, barriers, and worries faced by first and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents in order to help schools improve communication and partnership with Vietnamese parents.

### **Ethical Issues in the Study**

The consideration that the researcher is a second-generation Vietnamese immigrant who conducted the interviews might pose as an issue. However, the research interviews were structured around unbiased questions leaving no room for bias. The data

collection process and analysis was conducted in a professional manner with no bias towards person or answer. To also address the issue of bias during interviews, each participant was given a questionnaire to answer on their own time.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

The methodology chapter describes the procedures used to study challenges and worries of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents in Texas when they encounter the American school system. The purpose of the study investigated how these barriers between these parents and the American schools affected parental involvement. Lastly, the study identified differences of experience between first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents with American schools and teachers.

In order to collect data on the different challenges of these parents, the study was conducted through two stages of interviews. The first stage was a semi-structured interview with first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents, and the second stage was conducted with second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. The study also used self-answered questionnaire as the second form data collection.

The findings of this study were credible due to the appropriate research design and current research techniques resulting from existing literature. The reliability of the study rested upon sufficient time being given to each participant during the interview to fully answer and explain his or her experiences with the American school system. In order to provide accuracy the participants were given an opportunity to read the transcript of the interview. The study allowed for data collection through three different sources: interviews, questionnaires, and on site observations of how the participants act during the interview and their interaction with their children.

The small population size and closeness with researcher were limitations of this study, but the findings of this study helped guide school administrators and teachers to a better collaboration with Vietnamese parents. The ethical issues that concerned this study does not present any significant obstacles in which undermines the validity of the findings.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the data analysis, results of data analyses, and findings of the ethnographic study. An ethnographic research model was used in this study to understand the experiences of the cultural group of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents with the American school system. Along with data analysis, the chapter will include the background and experiences of the researcher.

Interviews and questionnaires were used as instruments to collect data. The researcher began the analysis of the data after collection. The analysis of data started with coding each response from the interview with participants. After coding, the responses were sorted into categories for first-generation parents and second-generation parents separately. Then the responses were compared between the two groups to find similarities and differences. The results of data analyses revealed different barriers and experiences not just between first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents but also within each group of parents.

The researcher is a second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parent who was born in Vietnam. As a second-generation Vietnamese immigrant, the researcher is motivated to help Vietnamese parents voice their opinions, experiences, and barriers with the American school system. The role of the researcher is to facilitate interviews with each participant and act as a transcriber during the interviews to record the responses of the participants.

### **Description of the Sample**

The research population consisted of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents in Texas. There were ten participants in the first-generation

Vietnamese immigrant group, and the gender ratio for this group of parents was 60% males and 40% females. For the purpose of this study, first-generation parents were parents born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States between the years of 1970 and 1990s for multiple ways. Parents who immigrated to the United States between 1970 and 1980 escaped Vietnam illegally by boat and the next set of first-generation parents came legally by plane to the United States. Most of the children from this group of parents have gone through the American school system and some are in or have finished college. Parents in this group attended school in Vietnam, and some had the opportunity to attend school in the United States.

Second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents were either born in their native country of Vietnam or in the host country. Gender ratio for this group of parents differed significantly from the first group with 10% males and 90% females. These parents have younger children that are currently attending school in the United States or have children that will enter the school system. Parents in this group did not attend school in Vietnam but all went to school in the United States. Out of the ten second-generation Vietnamese participants, eight of them entered the American school system at a fairly young age.

Each group of parents went through interviews with the researcher and provided responses to a questionnaire that was sent to him or her. Not all interviews were done face to face due to the nature of his or her busy schedule. Some of the interviews were conducted through Face Time. The response rate for interviews and questionnaires was 100% in both groups of parents.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

More ELL parents are entering their children into the American school system with the increase in immigration rate in the United States in the past few decades,

especially the Asian population. The Asian population grew by 43.3% between the years of 2000 and 2010, and 988,000 of this population was Vietnamese immigrants (Esri, 2012; Grieco, 2004). With such a high and fast increase in demographics it is necessary to understand the background and barriers of these parents with the American school system in order to enhance parental involvement in this group of parents. Research indicates parental involvement is positively correlated to the success of students in school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Although Hill and Taylor stress the importance of parental involvement, there is a lack of involvement for Asian parents by the American standard and definition of parental involvement.

Many researchers have discussed different barriers for ELL parents and formulated strategies for increasing parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Li, 2006; Murphy, 2005). However, there is not enough research that examines the struggles and barriers of Vietnamese immigrant parents. This was conducted to provide increased understanding of the struggles and barriers of Vietnamese parents in order to aid schools formulate strategies to improve communication and increase parental involvement for this cultural group.

Participants in the study consisted of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. Each parent has completed a semi-structured interview along with a questionnaire that discusses his or her experience with the American school system. A Daily Interpretive Analysis was done at the end of every interview day to provide a summary and interpretation of the information obtained during the interview.

The researcher transcribed each interview response along with recordings that has showcased the feelings and tone of the participants during the interviews that could not

be described through field notes alone. Each response was coded by demographics and background, challenges of the parents, and how this has or has not affected parental involvement. The researcher sorted the responses into different categories within each code. There were three categories under the Demographic code:

1. Reasons for leaving Vietnam
2. Education level in Vietnam and United States
3. Birth country of children

Under the Challenges of Parents code, there were three categories:

1. Differences and similarities between schools in Vietnam and the United States
2. First experience with schools and teacher
3. American schools meeting standards of parent

For the Parental Involvement code, there were also three categories:

1. Involvement with school
2. Involvement with child/children's education
3. How to increase parental involvement

In dividing the responses into categories, the researcher gained a richer understanding of the experiences each group of parents has with the American school system. The responses for first-generation Vietnamese parents were compared to that of second-generation parents to reveal similarities and differences and how schools have changed in communication and involvement of Vietnamese parents.

Using coding and analysis by Creswell (1994), the data was coded into different conceptual categories. Each category was based on the narrative responses of the participants; therefore, some were categorized as direct quotes in order to retain the



substance of the response. The data under went another level of analysis, which was the comparison of the data. Comparison was essential to the analysis progress because it created more abstract concepts.

An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study due to the research questions. The study looked at concerns and challenges of a certain ethnic group, Vietnamese parents. The study focused on understanding more about this ethnic group in order to help American schools establish a stronger parent-teacher relationship and to increase parental involvement. The researcher used participant responses to narrate the experiences of these parents. Due to the purposes of the study, an ethnographic approach seemed a better fit.

### **Summary of the Findings**

All first-generation parents were born in Vietnam and left between the years of mid-1970s to 1990. The reasons for leaving Vietnam vary between seeking freedom and finding a better future for their children. Of the ten first-generation parents, 40% stated the reason for leaving Vietnam was to seek freedom from communist suppression. One male participant stated “I came to the United States in 1989 to find freedom for myself and my family.” While 60% said it was a combination of freedom and to find a bright future for their children. “I left Vietnam in 1975 when the Vietnamese Communist Army Forces advanced from North Vietnam to South Vietnam,” stated another participant.

Table 1  
*Leaving Vietnam*

Reason	%
Freedom	40%
Both	60%
Better Life	0%

Every first-generation parent in the study attended some kind of school in Vietnam, and 8 of 10 received some kind of English language education. Tables two and three show the highest education level in Vietnam and the United States for first-generation Vietnamese parents in the study. Of the ten participants, one left during his fifth grade year, one completed eighth grade, one entered high but did not graduate before leaving, four completed high school, and three went on to college. Nine out of ten of the participants continued their education at college in the United States.

Table 2  
*Highest Education Level in Vietnam*

Education Level	%
5th Grade	10%
8th Grade	10%
10th Grade	10%
High School	30%
College	30%

Table 3  
*Highest Education Level in United States*

Education Level	%
High School	10%
College	90%

The response for birthplace of their children varies from being born in Vietnam, in the United States, or had children born in both countries. One male participant only had a daughter and she was born in Vietnam. Six of the participants had children born in the United States, and three had children born in both Vietnam and the United States. All children of first-generation parents in the study went to school in the United States.

Only 2 of 10 second-generation Vietnamese parents in the study were born American, while the other 8 were born in Vietnam. The participants who were born in

Vietnam were fairly young when they left with their parents. All participants attended school in the United States and all except for one who graduated college. They also all have children born in the United States and are enrolled in the American school system.

In comparing the school systems, first-generation parents shared some differences between schools in Vietnam and the United States. One parent commented, “If I had to compare the schools in Vietnam after 1975 to the schools in United States, I would say American schools far surpasses schools in Vietnam.” Each parent commented on how schools in the United States were more attentive to student needs and individuality, while schools in Vietnam paid more attention to what was in the books. Participant D stated that she felt overwhelmed with the information that was given to her by her Vietnamese teachers that she was starting to fall behind in school; however, when she attended school in America, she had lots of help from the teachers and thrived in school. According to first-generation parents, teachers and schools in the United States focus more on the whole child and not just “drill and kill” method of Vietnamese schools.

First-generation parents in the study stated that the American teachers were very kind and nice at the first meeting. Most had a positive first encounter with the American school system and teachers. Participant H, a first-generation male parent, stated had reservations sending his child to school especially when they know so little English; however, the teacher was so welcoming and warm that he felt that he had made the right decision. First-generation parents stated that schools in the United States did meet all of the expectations they had set for their children when compared to the schooling they had in Vietnam. They thought teachers were much more friendly and helpful than teachers in Vietnam when it came to interactions with parents.

As positive as these parents were about the American school system, they did have some worries and faced some challenges along the way with the American schools and teachers. Most parents faced the language barriers between English and Vietnamese, and although eight out of ten parents had exposure to English through school it was not enough for them to communicate effectively with American teachers in English. They were able to understand the teachers in regular simple conversations; however, the parents felt lost when the teachers talked more in-depth about certain subjects. Half of the participants needed translators when interacting with the teachers; however, most of the time there were none to effectively help these parents.

While American schools have met their expectations, first-generation parents worried that the schools did not focus as much on “đạo đức con người” or human morality. They felt this was not emphasized enough and was lacking from the American teachings. “I had to teach my children how to be respectful to their elders, parents, teachers, and toward each other because I felt that the schools did not focus on this as much as Vietnamese schools did,” stated participant E.

Vietnamese parents are very active just not as direct. Vietnamese parents did not spend much time participating in classroom or school activities like typical American parental involvement. They were involved in the learning of their children in other ways at home. These parents spent time at home to set up an environment at home that fosters learning such as hiring tutors, having their children participate in supplementary academic activities outside of school, creating a schedule for their children to do schoolwork, checking the work, keeping up with grades, making sure they ate at the right

time, and getting to bed at the right time. All these things help nourish the minds of their children so that they excel in school.

Unlike first-generation parents, these parents could not make comparisons between the two school systems, as they had no experiences with schools in Vietnam. Since all of the parents in this group attended school in the United States, they used their own experience as students in comparison to their experiences as parents in the school system. A participant stated, “As a teacher, I research strategies, ways of teaching, and data from other countries to compare with those of the United States. I found that students and schools in Finland are ranked higher than schools in the United States.”

Second-generation parents had similar responses to worries about the education of their child in the American school system. Nine parents stated that they felt the schools have not met the expectations for their children. Participant M responded:

I had to buy math and reading books outside of school and make my children do them after their homework and during the summers. I felt as if the schools were challenging my child enough, and especially during the summer they had nothing to hold them accountable for what they have learned.

All participants in this group of parents have enriched their children in some way, whether it was through a private tutor or workbooks they have bought themselves.

Both first- and second-generation parents were involved in the education of their children. Although they had limited English, first-generation parents held their children accountable for schoolwork and grades. The parents have set up an environment at home that fosters learning and assisted teachers by hold the child account for schoolwork at home. They were not as involved in school events unless they were invited to due to the

norms of the Vietnamese culture. According to participant I, he was not as involved in the schools as much because it grew up with the thinking that teachers were professionals and should have the trust of the parents. He did not want the teachers to feel pressured by his presence or that the teachers did not have his trust. Most of the first-generation parents in this study felt the same way and limited their visits to the schools to only parent-teacher conferences.

Most first and second-generation parents felt there was room for teachers and schools to improve in order to increase parental involvement for Vietnamese immigrant parents. These things range from having more translators for these parents during conferences to teachers creating an inviting environment for immigrant parents. A second-generation parent said that immigrant parents in general might feel intimidated by the teachers due to their lack of English proficiencies and so they do not participate in school functions as often as they wish to.

### **Presentation of the Data and Results**

Findings during the data analysis process revealed many patterns within each category. There were similarities in the reasons for first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents to leave Vietnam. Most immigrant parents have hopes for their children to have the best education possible and Vietnamese parents are no exception to this thinking.

The first-generation parents in this study have all encountered challenges during their journey to reach this better life such as enduring painful years in the Vietnamese concentration camp before earning paper work to come to America, or escaping by boat in the dangerous sea. The sea itself presented many of challenges like storms and hard waves hitting against the small wooden fishing boats used to escape Vietnam. These

Vietnamese immigrants had to overcome a sea full of pirates who awaits them in those dangerous seas. Some of the parents had stated that when the pirates stopped them, they climbed on the boat and took everything that they owned: shoes, jewelries, clothes, and food. The pirates left these parents with nothing to their names as they venture to a foreign country not knowing anyone and now have nothing. Participant A stated that she had a brother, who left before her, was stopped by pirates on his way in the middle of the sea. The pirates had raped his girlfriend and he was killed trying to protect her. His body was tossed overboard and the family only received notice of this through a family friend who was traveling with him years after his death. These parents carried worries and concerns for their lives and their children as they left the only home they have ever known to build a new life in a new country.

First-generation parents had many concerns and questions about their new lives in the foreign country. How will we survive with no money? Who can we depend on to help us? How are we supposed to enroll our kids in school? Will they do well in a school that is foreign to them? How will I help my children succeed in school with little knowledge about American schools, teachers, language, and culture? These questions and many more ran through the heads of these first-generation parents as they venture on their new quest for freedom. Most of the parents had little money to their name when they first step foot in America. Participant J and her sisters had 20 dollars in their pocket when they arrived, yet through the help of the Vietnamese community and church, they were able to enroll in school and completed college. Participant J graduated top three in her high school class and graduated with the highest honor at a university. She stated:

But this road to success was not easy, we had to live in a small run-down one-bedroom apartment and each of us had worked while going to school. We never wore new clothes or shoes they were all second or third hand clothes donated by the Vietnamese church. We had no form of transportation and had to quickly learn bus routes.

Parents with children had other concerns besides how to make enough money to support a family. These parents were worried that their children would not be able to adapt to the new school with teachers and kids that speak a different language. They were concerned that their children would not make friends or do well in school due to the difference in language and culture. Participant C stated:

I was so worried that my daughter would not make any friends because she looked different from everyone in her class. I remember my wife and I were so scared that our daughter will be an outcast or made fun of because she could not speak the language and didn't understand the teachers or kids in her class. We were also worried about her falling behind her peers and not able to do her schoolwork. We had all these worries and reservations before and after we stepped foot in America.

On the same note, some of these parents told the schools that their child spoke English at home because they did not want the teachers to look at their child differently. As a result, their children did not get the extra help from the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program.

Even though second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents did not face the same challenges as their parents, they too have worries about the education of their



children. They were worried that their children would not be challenged enough in school and not be able to keep up with the rest of the world. “Since I use to be a teacher, I know that American schools do not rank highly when compared to schools around the world such as schools in Finland,” responded Participant K.

Other second-generation parents were worried about placing their child in the Vietnamese program because they thought the exit test for this program was too hard. Participant M stated:

What if they failed the test and never able to graduate? That was my fear and so I decided to only teach my children English that way they won't have to be placed in the ESL or Bilingual programs. Plus it was much easier since the books we read to them were in English and their peers spoke English. It just seemed more logical at the time to teach them just English. Now that they're older, I wish we had taught them Vietnamese as well. It seemed such a shame for them to lose that part of their background.

Half of the participants in this group stated they only speak English to their children at home for convenience and because they did not want their children to fall behind their peers.

Most first-generation parents learned English in Vietnam to fulfill their second language requirements in school; however, most of the parents stated that this helped in reading and understanding English more than speaking. The English pronunciation was the hardest for them when they arrived in the United States. This presented a challenge for some of the parents because although they could understand some of what the teachers were saying, the teachers had a difficult time understanding what they were

saying. When he described his first experience with the American school system a male participant stated the following, “I could understand what they were saying, but I don’t think they understood what I was saying. This was the biggest problem I had when communicating with the teachers.”

Some first-generation parents did participate in school functions such as parent-teacher conferences, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), or field trips; however, their participation is by formal invitations only. While others stated they have never participated in events at the school because the teachers did not specifically ask for their help. The parents did not want to come to the school without an invitation by the school or teacher in fear they might disturb teachers. As a common norm in the Vietnamese culture, the parents see teachers as professionals and know and/or trust them whole-heartedly to teach their children.

Other parents stated time and work prevented them from being more involved in their children’s school events. As most of the first-generation parents came to the United States empty handed and with little help, they worked day and night even trying to squeeze in continuing their education preventing them from actively partaking in school events and activities. When asked about the reasons that interfered with their participation in school activities one participant responded:

My wife and I both worked during the day and at night we attended school at the community college. We knew that education was the only way for us to advance in a foreign country. Between work, our schooling, taking care of our daughter, and making sure she kept up with schoolwork we just had no time to participate in much of the events at the school because of.

However, all parents provided a home environment that fostered learning with routines, checking of children's schoolwork to make sure children did their homework, and opportunities for extracurricular activities.

The fact that there were not enough Vietnamese teachers at the time first-generation parents had their children in schools made it more difficult for parents to effectively communicate with teachers. A second-generation parent commented on the fact that her parents had much difficulty when they encountered the American schools and teachers. She stated, "My parents had trouble communicating to the teachers on how to help us with our school work. When my brother got in trouble at school it was hard for my parents to communicate with the schools on what he did and what actions were needed." Language barriers hindered their experiences with the schools and teachers, and although American teachers tried to help the parents, they felt it would have been more helpful if they had spoken to a Vietnamese teacher. Not every newsletter or letters from school were translated for these parents, and they often had to ask for help from family or friends to translate.

The findings in the study showed first- and second-generation Vietnamese parents have different worries and challenges with the American school system. The challenges and worries of first-generation parents were not in how the school will provide their children the best education because to them any school in America would be better than the schools in Vietnam at the current time. According to the data, language and cultural barriers were the most prominent challenges to having a better home and school partnership. One participant answered:

I felt that if I came in to offer my assistance in the classroom, then I would be disrupting and making the teachers feel uncomfortable. In Vietnam, we left teachings and school activities up to the teachers because they are the professionals, and I felt that if I entered the classroom I would make the teachers feel that I had no trust in them. Therefore, I only came when invited for conferences or open house at the beginning of the school year.

This was the feeling of most first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. How the Vietnamese cultural group views teachers presented a cultural barrier for parental involvement of Vietnamese parents.

Second-generation parents worried American schools are not living up to their expectations of a great education for their children. Some feel that the work is not rigorous enough when compared to schools in other countries. They feel teacher expectation are not high enough to enrich the minds of their children; therefore, some have found alternatives outside of school in tutoring programs or store bought workbooks as extra work for their children. Others worry that teachers are being pushed too hard to teach to the test that they are not paying attention as much attention to their children. These worries were not in the minds of first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents at the time their children were in school; however, both sets of parents indicated they value education very highly and put the education of their child as their priority.

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

American teachers hope to form a healthy home and school partnership with ELL parents as more and more ELL students continue to enter American schools daily. Research shows a lack of parental involvement from ELL parents in general and Asian parents specifically due to different challenges and worries (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Li,

2006; Murphy, 2005). This study is an ethnographic research of the Vietnamese immigrant cultural group. The study sheds light on the worries and challenges of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents during their interaction with the American school system.

Findings in the study showed common themes within each group of parents. First-generation parents were all born and attended school in Vietnam; therefore in comparison to Vietnamese schools, American schools ranked highly and exceeded their expectations for their children. While second-generation parents felt American schools were not rigorous enough to enrich the minds of their children when compared to other countries.

Another common theme for first-generation parents was language barrier. Although they had exposure to English during school in Vietnam, the parents felt that this was not enough to help their pronunciation. At the time there were little translation of teacher notes or newsletters and even fewer Vietnamese teachers making it difficult for them to communicate efficiently with American teachers.

Both first- and second-generation parents had the same concerns for their children in school. They were afraid that their children might fall behind because they spoke a different language; therefore, most did not place their children in the ESL or Bilingual programs offered by the schools. Some parents have now regretted not teaching Vietnamese because their children have lost this part of the culture.

First-generation parents entrusted teachers as professionals to teach and enhance the minds of their children; therefore, they would not attend school functions without personal invitations from the teachers. This seemed like a common theme amongst first-

generation Vietnamese parents as a cultural norm. Though they were not as active within the schools and did not attend many school functions, first-generation parents were involved in the learning of their children in other ways at home. They provided a learning atmosphere for their children and help them achieve success in school through extracurricular academic activities outside of school. The cultural barrier and other barriers faced by Vietnamese parents hindered their involvement in school activities and events.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Introduction to Discussion**

This chapter will discuss the meaning of the results by presenting and evaluating the results from the research. A summary of the results will be presented along with a critical assessment of how the results answer the research questions. In this chapter the researcher will make connections between what the results mean to the community of practice, how the results will add to the new knowledge to the community of scholars, and how it informs the literature.

The ethnographic study progressed through several stages to obtain accurate data for analysis and discussion. Each participant shared their experiences and worries with the American school system through semi-interviews, questionnaires, and observations. Data was organized and analyzed into themes to find commonalities and differences within the responses. The results aid schools and educators to differentiate strategies to improve parental involvement and communication with Vietnamese parents.

### **Summary of the Results**

Parental involvement has been positively associated with increase in student achievement and academic success of students in school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). However, parental involvement for parents of ELL students is lower than American parents. The Asian population in the United States increased by 43.3% between the years of 2000–2010, and the Vietnamese population was 988,000 within those years (Esri, 2012; Grieco, 2004). With an increase in the immigration population, American schools and teachers need to make more of an effort to increase parental involvement of ELL parents. Different researchers suggest barriers of ELL parents and strategies for schools

to improve partnership with these parents; however, there is little research that is specific to Vietnamese immigrant parents (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Li, 2006; Murphy, 2005).

The purpose of the study was to be the voice for first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents as they describe their experiences, challenges, and worries with the American school system. The study compared responses from first-generation Vietnamese parents to second-generation Vietnamese parents to learn from the past, see how schools have improved since the first interaction of first-generation parents and the American school system, and how schools have changed throughout the years according to the experiences of second-generation Vietnamese parents.

The results provided answers for the following research questions:

1. What can Vietnamese parents tell about their challenges and worries with the American school system?
2. How do the challenges of first-generation Vietnamese parents differ from second-generation Vietnamese parents in the United States?
3. How do the challenges faced by Vietnamese parents when they interact with American schools and educators affect their parental involvement?

This ethnographic research provided insights on the experiences of Vietnamese immigrant parents with the American school system through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The responses of each participant were transcribed, recorded, and some were translated from Vietnamese to English. The responses were sorted into different themes to compare commonalities and differences between the experiences of each participant.



The results yielded similarities within the first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents group. First generation parents were all born in Vietnam and all have experiences with the Vietnamese school system. Each parent had some kind of interaction with the English language through school as a second language course. Schools in Vietnam required students to take either French or English as a second language. The first-generation parents that went to secondary school in Vietnam chose to take English as their second language, and others took English courses to prepare themselves for life in America. However, all of the parents said this did not help them with pronunciation of English words. Parents mostly were involved in school activities only when personally asked by the teacher to school. This was due to the norm of the Vietnamese culture that parents did not want to come to school uninvited in fear they might disrupt the teachers. Every first-generation parent stated schools in the United States far exceeds his or her expectation when compared to schools in Vietnam. This differs from the responses of second-generation Vietnamese parents.

For this study, there were differences between first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. The first difference between the two generations was the gender ratio of participants. There was more male first-generation participant compared to the one male second-generation participant. A first-generation male participant stated he was more involved with school activities than his wife was. When asked why he answered:

My wife was more nervous and shy when having to speak English; therefore, whenever we had to communicate with teachers or other school members she left

it up to me. I feel that this was how most Vietnamese women felt back then and the husbands communicated more with the schools.

Another difference between the two generations was the fact that one generation thought the American school system provided the best education for their children, while the other generation thought the system could use improvements and did not meet all of their expectations for their children. Second-generation parents were worried that American schools would not meet all of the expectations for the education of their children. Some stated that the schoolwork seemed to easy and not challenging enough for their children; therefore, they had to look to other alternatives to advance their child in school such as extra math and reading workbooks. These parents actively participated in the school functions; however, teachers could involve Vietnamese immigrant parents more in school activities.

### **Discussion of the Results**

First-generation Vietnamese parents shared that they find American schools to exceed their expectations when compared to schools in Vietnam. One participant stated, “To be honest, schools in Vietnam after 1975 cannot compare to schools in America. Schools in America focus the child and not as much about politics.” American schools focus more on developing the whole child. Teachers are concern with nurturing all aspects of the child from mental to physical and even home life. Schools in Vietnam after the civil war focused on strengthening communist views and focused less on nurturing the child. Students in Vietnam did not have the freedom to voice their views or read certain books of choice. Everything was very dictated by the government from what type of books to read to the type of music to listen to.

This was why so many first-generation Vietnamese parents ventured the dangerous road to American. They were seeking freedom for their children to learn and expand their knowledge about the world and to have teachers that cared for the child and not politics. These parents yearned freedom of choice, freedom to learn, freedom to live, and they found that freedom in America and in American schools. For this reason, first-generation parents stated that American schools far exceeded their expectations when compared to Vietnamese schools after 1975.

While first-generation parents praised American schools, second-generation parents have varying perspective. Second-generation parents in the study were not as pleased with the American school system as the generation before them. While they think the schools provided adequate teaching and nurturing of their children, they believed there is still room for improvement. Unlike their parents, these parents now have knowledge about education system of other countries and use this information to compare schools from around the world to schools in the United States. One participant stated, “I have read about how American schools are ranked much lower than schools in countries such as Finland and Japan in math and even in reading. I worry that my children are not developing the skills needed to succeed in this world through American schools.”

These parents felt that American schools fail to challenge their children in mathematics and reading comprehension. As a result second-generation Vietnamese parents took it upon themselves to challenge the intellect of their children in activities outside of school. Some parents bought learning books in math and reading for their

children to do after finishing schoolwork and during the summer. Others have enrolled their children in learning programs such as Kumon or hired private tutors.

Results also showed there was room for improvement even though the American school system has improved with communicating with Vietnamese immigrant parents over the years. Due to the small sample size of the study, only one second-generation Vietnamese immigrant male parent agreed to participate in the study. There were five invitations sent out to second-generation males; however, only one male agreed to participate in the study. The other four males did not agree to participate in the study because they did not have much experience with the school systems. One male responded:

My wife deals more with things related to the kids' school because I work late hours, and I am tired on my day off to participate in school activities; therefore, I don't think I can contribute much to the study.

This revealed that Vietnamese males did not have much experience with the schools, whether it is because of time or other factors. The results of the recruitment of second-generation Vietnamese males showed that there is a lack of male parental involvement in Vietnamese parents. These results point to a need for schools and teachers to design different strategies to promote parental involvement in Vietnamese males.

The results from the study yield two barriers that prevented first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents from being actively involved in school activities. The first barrier for this group of parents was language. Even though these parents had exposure to English in Vietnam, it was not enough to effectively communicate with American teachers and schools. This barrier prevented first-generation Vietnamese

parents from participating in a lot of school functions. Even though these parents could understand the English, it was harder for them to speak the language where others could understand. This discouraged some parents from volunteering at school events and offer help in the classroom.

Another barrier that kept most first-generation Vietnamese parents from actively involved in school related activities were cultural barrier. Parents in Vietnam viewed teachers as professionals and trusted them fully to educate their children. Parents did not enter the schools much in fear that they might interfere with the professional at work. They also did not want the teachers to feel that they do not trust them and felt that by coming to school often would give the teachers the feeling of distrust. This cultural belief carried with these parents to the United States. The view of teachers as professional and the trust placed with them carried on as first-generation Vietnamese parents enrolled their children into the American school system. Therefore, Vietnamese parents did not come to the schools without an invitation from the teachers or other school members.

The results from the study indicated that language barrier was no longer an obstacle for the current generation Vietnamese parents in the American school system. Second-generation Vietnamese parents did not state language as a barrier for their hesitant to participate in school events. American schools have overcome the language barrier for Vietnamese parents by increasing the number of Vietnamese speaking teachers who could help translate and interpret for non-speaking teachers. In doing so, schools were able to reach out to many more Vietnamese parents through translated newsletters, teacher comments, etc.

Even though first-generation parents no longer have children in the American school system, schools and teachers could use what was learned from the study to improve parental involvement for future generations of Vietnamese and other immigrant parents. The cultural barrier that first-generation Vietnamese parents faced still exists today with Vietnamese as well as parents of other ethnic groups. The study revealed that first-generation Vietnamese parents did not enter the classroom as much due to the cultural view that teachers are professionals and parents will not interfere in the classroom as a sign of respect to the teachers. With this knowledge about Vietnamese culture, American teachers should try to address the how to make parents feel a part of the learning experience of their children verses being a burden to the teachers. Teachers need to figure out a way to let parents know that parents will not cross the line of disrespect if they participate in school functions such as volunteering in the classroom.

Administrators and teachers can do many things to assure parents that they are welcomed in the school and classroom. One way to achieve more parental involvement in the classroom for Vietnamese parents, teachers and administrators could inform these parents of what parental involvement looks like in America. During this meeting between the school and parents, administrators and teachers could provide examples of different types of parental involvement. Teachers could also inform parents when it would be good times for parents to come visit the classrooms. Other ways to help Vietnamese parents be more involve directly with school functions is to translate letters from other stakeholders such as PTA. This will allow parents to feel more invited to school functions and also help those parents who have a hard time reading English.

## **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

American schools experienced an increase in ELL students because of growth in the immigration population in the United States. Due to this, American teachers faced new challenges in communication with these parents and trying to increase parental involvement in immigrant parents. Studies have shown that teachers and schools need help to increase parental involvement with Asian parents, specifically Vietnamese parents (Sanders, Epstein & Connors-Tadros, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Schools lacked the knowledge and understanding about Vietnamese parents because there has been little research on first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents.

This study extended the limited research done on Vietnamese parents and provides American teachers and schools knowledge about these parents. The study sought to understand challenges and worries faced by first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. Studies showed some barriers such as cultural differences between home and school, language, lack of knowledge of the American school system, and education level of parents that hinder the traditional American school and home partnership (Anderson, 1995; Guo, 2009; Li, 2006; Phan, 2004); however, the results of the study show first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents exhibit some of these barriers but not all.

First-generation participants from the study stated their challenges in having an affective school-home partnership mainly lies with two barriers, language and cultural differences. First-generation participants explained they were able to understand some of what was said by teachers and other school members; however, their ability to speak English was limited and teachers were not able to understand them without an interpreter. For this reason, some of the parents did not actively participate in school functions but

provided a learning home environment for their children as a form of parental involvement.

Another reason for their lack of direct parental involvement with school events was cultural differences. In the Vietnamese culture, teachers are given the highest respect and seen as professionals who know exactly what their child needed as far as academic goes; therefore, these parents did not want to interfere with the teachers as they did their jobs. Most of these parents never came to the schools without an invitation from the teachers.

### **Limitations**

There were some limitations to the study such as small sample size and the experiences that second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents may have with the American school system. The 20 participants of the study was a small sample of the Vietnamese immigrant parents in the United States, and having such a small sample size might yield a lesser chance to detect a true effect.

Some second-generation Vietnamese parents did not have experience with the American school system because they did not have children that have yet to enter the system. Their lack of experience may be a limitation to the study because they could not comment about first interactions with teachers and schools. However, these parents brought a different viewpoint to the study as they have their own worries and concerns with American schools and teachers.

### **Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

The study provided information to the practice of education by learning more about first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents. American schools lack the knowledge necessary to build an affective school-home partnership with



Vietnamese parents in order to increase a more direct parental involvement. The result from the study filled in the gap between American schools and Vietnamese immigrant parents. What the parents have been through in order to seek freedom and a better life for their children speaks volume as to how far they would go for their children to succeed in school. With this result, teachers and schools now know the reasons behind the lack of direct parental involvement of first- and second-generation parents, and hopefully build upon this knowledge to increase future immigrant parents.

The study also uncovered worries of first- and second-generations Vietnamese parents. These parents worried that their children would not fit in, worried how they were going to help with schoolwork, worried that their children might fall behind, etc. By addressing these worries schools and teachers could build a stronger bond with the immigrant parents thus increasing their trust in the American school system and possibly improve parental involvement of these parents.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

As America steps into the future, understanding more about immigrant parents and the cultural backgrounds of immigrant students becomes essential to the academic success of students. It is important for teachers and schools to learn about the reasons why immigrant parents may not be directly active in classroom and school events. In doing so they are able come up with more effective strategies to improve parental involvement in these parents.

For future research, the study of first- and second-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents could expand to learning more about second- and third-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents that are in the United States but live in areas where it is mostly inhabited by Vietnamese people. Vietnamese is spoken throughout these areas

from restaurants to groceries to the schools. There are many more Vietnamese-speaking teachers that teach at schools in these areas than in any other areas in America, but does this fact change the role that Vietnamese parents play in school events? Are these parents more directly active with school functions or is it the same with Vietnamese parents everywhere else? This creates a new opportunity for further research and learning about Vietnamese parents in different parts of the United States.

### **Conclusion**

Past research showed a gap between Vietnamese immigrant parents and American schools. The study sought to fill in that gap by providing knowledge about the challenges and worries of first- and second-generation Vietnamese parents. First-generation parents faced adversities such as cultural differences and language barriers when they interacted with American schools and teachers for the first time. Due to these challenges, these parents did not participate in much of school events like other American parents would have; however, they were involved in their learning of their children in other ways. They created a learning environment at home and provided their children with extra work to help them advance in school.

Although first- and second-generation parents faced different challenges and have different concerns, they all value education highly. Second-generation parents in the study showed concerns with the American school system stating that they worry the schools did not challenge their children enough. Like the parents in the generation before them, these parents also provided a strong learning environment at home and sought enrichment outside of school.

The results from the study could help American schools and teachers understand more about Vietnamese immigrant parents and their reasons for lack of direct parental

involvement. With this knowledge, schools can begin to improve parental involvement and build their relationship with Vietnamese parents and immigrant parents from other cultures. Learning about their uncertainties and addressing those concerns will help American schools have a better chance to improve relationships with immigrant parents.

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## Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Khanh P Le

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Digital Signature

Khanh P Le

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Name (Typed)

6-17-17

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Date

## **Appendix A: Interview Questions in English**

### **1. Demographics**

- What was your reason to leave Vietnam?
- When did you come to the United States?
- What is your experience with the Vietnamese school system?
- Were you able to go to school in Vietnam? If so what was the highest school level completed?
- Did you learn English in Vietnam or before you came to the United States?
- Have you ever attended school in the United States?
- Were your children born in Vietnam or the United States?
- How old was/were your children when they started school in America?

### **2. Challenges**

- How are schools in the United States different from schools in Vietnam?
- How are schools in the United States similar to schools in Vietnam?
- Could you tell me about your first experience with school?
- Could you tell me about your experiences with teachers?
- What thoughts about American schools and teachers?
- Do you think that the American schools met your standards for your child's education?
- What were your feelings in regards to your interactions with the teachers?

### **3. Involvement**

- How were you involved in your children's schools?
- How were you involved in your child's education?

- What are your educational values?
- Do you think the American school system has improved in how they interact with immigrant parents?
- What do you think teachers and schools in America could do to improve the involvement of immigrant parents in general and Vietnamese parents specifically?

## **Appendix B: Interview Questions in Vietnamese**

### **1. Bản Thân**

- Lý do nào quý vị rời Việt Nam?
- Quý vị đến Mỹ khi nào?
- Quý vị có những kinh nghiệm gì về hệ thống học vấn ở Việt Nam?
- Ở Việt Nam quý vị có đi học không? Nếu có thì quý vị hoàn tất cao nhất cấp nào?
- Quý vị có học Anh Văn trước khi đến Mỹ không?
- Quý vị có theo học trường nào ở Mỹ không?
- Các con của quý vị sinh ra ở Việt Nam hay ở Mỹ?
- Các con của quý vị đến trường lúc mấy tuổi?

### **2. Đi sâu vào vấn đề**

- Trường học ở Mỹ khác với trường học ở Việt Nam chỗ nào?
- Trường học ở Mỹ giống trường học ở Việt Nam chỗ nào?
- Quý vị có thể nói cho tôi về lần đầu quý vị đến trường?
- Quý vị có thể nói cho tôi cảm nghĩ của quý vị về các Thầy Cô?
- Điều gì làm quý vị thấy khó hiểu về trường học và Thầy Cô ở Mỹ?
- Quý vị thấy trường học ở Mỹ có đáp ứng những yêu cầu cơ bản cho việc học của con quý vị không?

### **3. Tham gia**

- Quý vị có tham gia gì ở trường không?
- Quý vị quan tâm đến việc học của các con như thế nào?
- Quý vị đánh giá về việc học thế nào?



- Quý vị có nghĩ rằng hệ thống trường học của Mỹ đã có những thay đổi cách thức liên hệ với những phụ huynh di dân không?
- Theo quý vị thì Thầy Cô và trường học ở Mỹ nên làm gì thêm để liên hệ tốt hơn với những phụ huynh di dân nói chung và phụ huynh Việt Nam nói riêng?