Good Parenting: Comparing Hmong American Parents’ Ideas about being a Good Parent from First-Generation to Second-Generation.

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Purpose

What do we already know about the subject?
- Immigrant families, specifically Hmong American parent-child relationships, become strained due to conflicts stemming from generational differences (Lee et al., 2009; Lamborn & Nguyen, 2012), possibly due to acculturation (Sipple & Cavanaugh, 2013). Although there are few studies focused on Hmong American parenting, limited research has explored ideas of good parents across two generations with Hmong American parents.

What this study adds to the literature?
- Given the importance of parenting on children’s socio-emotional and cognitive development, understanding how parents define what constitutes a good parent in the context of acculturation is critical to working with immigrant parents, especially smaller immigrant groups such as the Hmong. Therefore, the present study aimed to address how Hmong parents defined good parents, what attributes they associated with good parents across generations, and where these ideas of good parents originated from by different generations of parents.

Methods

Sample:
- In-depth interviews were conducted with 27 Hmong parents. Six participants were excluded due to equipment malfunction or missing information. The final sample consisted of 21 parents (8 first-generation, 2 of 1.5 generation, and 11 second-generation parents).
- Due to the small size of the 1.5 generation and similar conceptual perspectives, participants were merged with first-generation parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Data analysis approach:
- A content comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was adopted to group data into themes. Common codes were created based on phrases from transcripts. Initial codes were refined by research team and the final codes were used to code the rest of transcripts. Using Padilla-Walker and Cario’s (2004) coding procedures, themes in transcripts were coded as 1 = not present, 2 = vague, and 3 = clearly present. Each coder read and developed themes separately before meeting to refine overall groups of themes. To ensure reliability, 10% of the transcripts were randomly selected for independent coders to analyze (Cohen’s kappa > .80). Themes that were found in 25% of the transcripts (number of transcripts with theme/total transcripts) were selected to be included in the results.

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Good Parenting Themes

First Generation Parents
- Know How to Communicate with Children
- Open, clear, and positive communication style to suggest parents are not controlling and provide reasons when talking to children

Second Generation Parents
- Are Patient (Sib Ngev)
- To not get upset and/or have a positive attitude.
- Follow Through With Children (Hauv Luu Yaj, Luu Phia)
- Following through with discipline so children understand right from wrong.
- Protect Children from Harms (Tei Thay Me Nyuav)
- Being aware of potential danger in children’s environment and educating children about dangers along with feelings of worry or anxiety over child’s well-being.

In your opinion, what is a good father/mother? What does a good father/mother do?

Shared across generations
- Involve in Their Children’s Lives (Koom Tog Me Ngev)
- Spend time with children, helping children with homework, attending school events
- Provide for Their Children (Mhav Me Nyuav: guav cem, guav ha: guav cib)
- Provide material goods, clothes, and structure for children.

Where did you learn the idea of a good mother/father from?

Family members
- “In Hmong terms, we follow our clan. Kind of you know, so my Thai clan, I would just look at the aunts and uncles that I felt were good father and good mothers, good leaders for their kids first and then the community. I kind of picked up things from people that way too.”

Professional experiences
- “Learning classes at school and I also learn from my parents’ being-time main class that I took when I had her.”

Discussion

- Across both generations, parents mentioned that good parents provide for their children and are involved in their lives in ways that promote school success (e.g., doing homework, attending school events, establishing an attachment and relationship). Second generation parents were more likely to stress various topics related to good parenting compared to first generation. Specifically, second generation parents emphasized good parents protect their children from harm (e.g., gangs, bullying).
- First generation Hmong parents were more likely to report learning ideas of good parenting from their own family members. In comparison, second generation parents reported a variety of sources that they learned good parenting ideas from (family members, self, through mainstream American culture, and professional education).
- Implications – immigrant parents tend to doubt their parenting skills, felt that they could no longer control their children, especially during adolescence (Portes & Rumbaut, 2000; Xiong et al., 2005), and are encouraged to participate in parenting programs that were designed for non-immigrant parents (Christians & Ng, 2003). Understanding immigrant parents’ ideas about what constitutes good parenting can be used to empower immigrant parents and improve parenting curricula to be culturally appropriate.
- This study is limited to a small sample size drew from one immigrant group. Future studies should include multiple immigrant groups with larger sample sizes across different generations to learn about how parents’ ideas of parenting change over time.