**Conflict Wisdom[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**A Key Resource to Transform Intergenerational Conflicts in Family Ministry**

Research Paper

by

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**Abstract:** This article examines how Vietnamese American Catholic families navigate the intersections of faith narratives and cultural traditions to preserve their family legacy. Participatory Action Research is proposed to involve marginalized communities in the research process. The first part presents findings from my research on intergenerational conflicts. The second part focuses on a literature review that engages with these findings. The final part discusses conflict theory and utilizing conflict wisdom as a resource for transforming intergenerational conflicts in family ministry.

**Introduction:** Vietnamese immigrants faced numerous challenges after the Vietnam War, including loss, trauma, and cultural dissonance. Adapting to new lives in countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia involved language barriers, financial hardship, and identity crises. Vietnamese immigrant families often experience strained dynamics due to intergenerational trauma, cultural disparities, and communication difficulties. However, they also found opportunities in their adopted countries, including education, economic prosperity, freedom, diversity, and the chance to rebuild their lives. The Vietnamese American Catholic community struggled to reconcile their cultural heritage with their religious beliefs to fit in a diverse socio-political environment such as the United States.[[2]](#footnote-2) Still, they have the potential to overcome these challenges and ensure the community's long-term viability. This research examines family ministry and faith formation within the Vietnamese American Catholic community, focusing on the interplay between faith narratives and cultural traditions in the context of immigration. It addresses how Vietnamese American Catholic families can navigate the intersections of faith narratives and cultural traditions to preserve their family legacy despite intergenerational conflicts. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is proposed to involve marginalized communities in the research process and enact changes collaboratively. The first part presents findings from my research, including intergenerational conflicts resulting from acculturation, cultural expectations, and communication challenges. The second part focuses on the literature review in conversation with my findings. Lastly, the last part discusses conflict theory and utilizing conflict wisdom as a resource for transforming intergenerational conflicts in family ministry.

1. **SURPRISING FINDINGS**

The primary objective of my research is to examine the impact of immigration on the ability of Vietnamese families to shape their religious and cultural identity. Specifically, I aim to gain insight into how Vietnamese-American Catholic families develop their spiritual identity and pass down their faith to the next generation. Additionally, I am interested in exploring how these families navigate narratives and traditions within family faith formation (FFF). As a participatory action researcher, I have remained open to new knowledge emerging throughout the research process. Although intergenerational conflicts and the disruption of family traditions were not the main focus of my research with the focus group, these themes frequently surfaced as participants shared their experiences using a narrative approach. Consequently, this unexpected finding influenced the direction of my research, prompting a deeper exploration of intergenerational conflicts in FFF. Notably, all participants reported encountering one or more intergenerational gaps or conflicts. These conflicts included cultural and generational differences, clashes in values, and breakdowns in communication, misunderstandings, silence, strained relationships, and disparities in lifestyle, conflicts in communication styles, role conflicts, unaddressed trauma, and concerns regarding mental health. To better understand this finding from the focus groups, in-depth interviews and exploratory analysis were conducted, as outlined in the methodology section.

**II. METHODS**

This research utilizes Participatory Action Research (PAR) as its central methodology. PAR emphasizes active engagement of the community being studied, empowering community members to contribute to the research process and ensuring accurate representation of their experiences. Data collection employs three primary methods. First, I conducted three sessions in a parish setting to explore family dynamics related to faith formation. Guided by predetermined questions, these focus groups facilitated the exchange of experiences and co-create new practices for nurturing faith in immigrant families. Second, semi-structured and in-depth interviews with five parents, four teachers, and three church leaders helped me delve further into individual perspectives. To qualify for participation in this research, prospective participants must meet the following criteria: parents belonging to 1 and 1.5 generations of immigrants, English-speaking, Vietnamese American, and of the Catholic faith. They must also have children under 18 residing in their household. Eligible teachers include those who have served as catechists or Viet Ngu teachers in Sunday School at the Blessed Andrew Phu Yen parish. Church leaders, such as priests, parish council members, community leaders, or representatives of other faith-based organizations, are also eligible to participate. Through these interviews, Vietnamese American Catholic families provided valuable insights into faith formation within the home. Finally, participant observation at Blessed Andrew Phu Yen Parish-Saint Clement Church allowed immersion in the participants' environment. Engaging in liturgy, Sunday school, cultural celebrations, and parent formation workshops gave me a deeper understanding of the participants' context. Observation and document analysis enhanced the data collected from focus groups, and interviews are crucial. Incorporating insights from various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology, enabled me to understand the issues impacting the community comprehensively.

This combination of methods enables me to comprehensively understand the experiences and perspectives of Vietnamese immigrant families regarding faith and family life. To ensure a fair and holistic analysis, I asked permission to record all focus group discussions and interviews; I then transcribed and analyzed them for recurring themes, with the participants' consent. The findings of this analysis can then be shared with the participants to obtain feedback, promoting collaboration and a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Vietnamese immigrant families in faith formation. By accurately representing their voices and experiences, this qualitative approach aimed to ultimately accompany and empower Vietnamese American Catholic families in raising their children within the faith. All names mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

**III. RESULTS:**

Immigrant families need help in transmitting their heritage for several reasons: acculturation gaps, dissonant cultural expectations, and communication difficulties. Although intergenerational conflict happens in daily life in all families, immigrant and refugee families add another layer to their family hardship, immigration, and resettlement. The pace of adaptation varies based on each period, age group, and gender. My studies demonstrate how the acculturation process influences family relationships in immigrant families and also echoes early research.[[3]](#footnote-3) I will group their conflict stories rooted in intergenerational gaps into three main themes: Conflicts due to resettlement and acculturation; cultural expectations; and communication. These conflicts can directly or indirectly impact FFF, which I will explain in the next section.

1. **Conflicts Due to Resettlement and Acculturation**

Conflicts between parents and children often arise from differences in their experience of adaptation and acculturation, which are influenced by age and contextual factors. For example, Vietnamese individuals born in the U.S. have not endured the war, poverty, and persecution that their grandparents or parents faced in Vietnam. This lack of shared experience can lead to misunderstandings and resentment. Parents tend to hold onto their memories of Vietnam and reinforce their unresolved trauma, of which their children are unaware. Thus, the children tend to judge their parents due to their strict parenting style or emotional distance. For example, when Xuan asked his father why he had never shared these experiences, his father admitted that he was concerned that Xuan wouldn't be interested since he is American-born, has all he needs or wants, and has never been hungry or thirsty a day in his life.  
 On the other hand, parents often overlook the trauma of racism experienced by their US-born Asian/Vietnamese children. These conflicts and misunderstandings have a lasting impact on the relationships and well-being of future generations. One mother in the focus group shared an incident involving her daughter's behavior when she picked her up from school. Due to the child's misconduct, the mother decided to withhold the promised ice cream treat and cancel their planned outing. The mother explained,

While waiting for my daughter, I spoke with another parent whose child is in the same class. A few minutes later, our daughters emerged from school without acknowledging each other. I asked my daughter to greet the other parent and her friend, but she refused. I was disappointed and expressed my embarrassment to her. She remained silent, so I told her she would not get the ice cream as promised earlier. Despite this, she continued to remain silent."

After the focus group session, I spoke with the mother one-on-one, encouraging her to communicate openly with her daughter to understand why she reacted that way. During the subsequent focus group meeting, the mother elaborated on her experience: "I mistakenly punished my daughter without considering the challenges she faced at school that week. She was bullied and excluded by her peers, especially the individual I had urged her to greet at the school gate. These children made derogatory comments, saying, “You are different from us. Your skin is yellow, and you have a flat nose like your mom and sister. We do not like you here. You do not belong.” She cried when she told me that story. I cried, too. I hugged her and said, “I am so sorry.” This story highlights the difficulties immigrant parents face in supporting their children when they experience marginalization in a school setting.

In my previous research on children's agency, I emphasized the importance of creating spaces where children's voices can be heard.[[4]](#footnote-4) In traditional Vietnamese families with patriarchal structures, children's voices are typically not given much weight. Immigrant parents, who have made significant sacrifices, often believe their children have an easy and effortless life in America, the Promised Land for many immigrants. Unfortunately, this narrative diminishes the agency of immigrant children, as their parents are unaware of the challenges and suffering they face in a new country. Such narratives can be harmful and discriminatory. According to a 2021 study based on data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, children were approximately thirty times more likely to report experiencing discrimination compared to their parents. They were also five times more likely to anticipate discrimination regardless of the situation and three times more likely to feel discriminated against.[[5]](#footnote-5) When I shared this fact with a focus group of parents, some admitted they were unaware of the difficulties their children might face in the land they called the "American dream."

1. **Conflicts Due to Cultural Expectations**

An intergenerational gap caused by cultural and gender expectations in Vietnamese families occurs when parents rigidly adhere to Vietnamese collective culture. Within this framework, parents provide for their children and view it as a "generational sacrifice" for which children should be grateful. However, this narrative can be detrimental to both children and parents as it promotes a unidirectional love from parents to children and perpetuates a model that portrays children as passive recipients. Consequently, children can be seen as economic burdens within the family. While this narrative may reflect a form of love, its emphasis on unequal parent-child relationships is harmful.  
 A second example occurs when parents place excessive expectations on their children to meet educational and peer-related goals without allowing for open conversations or questioning. This clashes with the children's culture and the formation of their identity and mindset, aligning with previous research on intergenerational conflicts. Many parents acknowledge the challenges of balancing collectivism and individualism within the Vietnamese immigrant family dynamic. In fact, at least two mothers in the study expressed frustration with their “self-centered” children, while another categorized her children as "demanding and selfish." The root of this issue lies in Vietnamese cultural expectations that often lead to conflicts within families.[[6]](#footnote-6) In contrast to the parents' mindset of being the 'sacrifice generation,' their children's school and community environment reinforces in them to shape their identity based on American values such as autonomy, freedom from self-discipline, the pursuit of self-fulfillment, and individual self-determination. Therefore, bridging this intergenerational gap in cultural expectations is critical for both parents and children.

1. **Conflicts Due to Communication**

In Vietnamese immigrant families, poor communication often arises from a clash between the communication styles of the two cultures: collectivism versus individualism. In my group research on poor communication, a Vietnamese mother (Lien) shared her difficulty communicating with her daughter concerning their family business. She admitted that her daughter, at 22, was resentful of her recommendations. On one occasion, the daughter misplaced money from their shared business. Instead of asking her daughter to explain what happened, the mother blamed her for being careless. Consequently, the daughter felt that her mother did not trust her judgment. She chose to stop working with her mother because she thought she was overly controlled. On the other hand, the mother interpreted this as challenging her authority. The conflict between them goes beyond the loss of money; it is about how they communicate and handle problems, which creates stress in their relationship dynamics. Like many Vietnamese parents, Lien does not allow her children to express their thoughts and feelings because of fear of challenging her authority. American-born children, however, do not possess the ability to decipher their parents' non-verbal language despite their parents' expecting them to have this skill. Thus, harmonizing with their parents' communication styles can be highly challenging. Skills such as sharing, listening, and understanding each other's positions are crucial to enhance communication and build trust within the family.  
 During an interview with a family regarding intergenerational faith formation in their home, I discovered that the children needed to be aware of the generational gaps resulting from a lack of sharing and communication about the family's origin and history. Family-sharing opportunities were rare, depriving the children of hearing their parents' and grandparents' stories. During a two-hour interview with the extended family, one of the most valuable moments was when the children and grandchildren had the opportunity to listen to the older generation talk about their experiences before and after immigration, how their lives were transformed after leaving refugee camps, and all the factors that contributed to shaping who they are today. After the interview, some young people expressed that this was their first experience of the older generations being vulnerable in front of them. This encounter fostered deeper love, compassion, and understanding within them. They wished they had known about this earlier, as it would have further strengthened their family bonds. Therefore, conflicts caused by poor communication prevent families from understanding one another's lives, experiences, and perspectives and diminish family bonding and harmony.

The following section analyzes how the impact of expectation, miscommunication, and a lack of sharing among family members can result in conflicts and misunderstandings within the family unit. The key question to be explored is whether immigrants can successfully cultivate a new life while fostering and maintaining healthy family dynamics amid these challenges. The literature on this subject examines three primary intergenerational gaps that were a surprise finding in my research.

**IV. RELEVANT LITERATURE AND DISCUSSION:**

This section discusses my findings regarding the literature and explores implications for further PAR projects, policies, and actions.

1. **Intergenerational Conflicts Due to Acculturation**

Carlos E. Sluzki examines the acculturation process immigrant families encounter in adapting between two cultures. Within these families, some members choose to maintain their original culture. In contrast, others fail to engage with the new culture or abandon their traditional ways entirely to adopt a new identity.[[7]](#footnote-7) Consequently, a significant generation gap can arise, particularly when one acculturates more quickly. Vietnamese parents often possess a strong cultural identity upon their arrival in the United States. In contrast, their children arrive at a young age or are born in the U.S., shaping their identity within the new country. Consequently, resentment and reactions to acculturation affect each family member differently.  
 Both parents and children frequently experience a significant intergenerational gap and conflicts concerning their acculturation rate, expectations, communication, and lifestyles. This becomes particularly apparent when immigrant families change due to immigration, modernization, and alterations in collectivism, hierarchy, and patriarchy. For individuals, acculturation often entails relinquishing traditional cultural values and behaviors while adopting the values and behaviors of the dominant society.[[8]](#footnote-8) Assimilation, a form of acculturation, involves minority cultures changing and adapting to the dominant culture. The extent of voluntary or forced assimilation can vary. Individuals who are marginalized, isolated, or assimilated may experience greater stress during acculturation compared to those who choose integration.[[9]](#footnote-9) Changes in identity resulting from acculturation can impact individual and group behaviors, cognition, and personality, which lead to feelings of ambivalence or alienation.  
 Immigrant parents encounter unique challenges in maintaining their cultural values within their parenting styles; Vern L. Bengston describes this as "biracial socialization.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Families of color in the United States must navigate parenting within their own culture and the broader culture. The impact of acculturation on Vietnamese families can make preserving and promoting traditional values and practices difficult. Similarly, immigrant children face numerous obstacles in the process of resettlement due to lower socioeconomic status. Many children lack access to resources for after-school daycare and end up at their parents' workplaces, such as nail salons or restaurants. Some children grapple with memories of exile or the loss of family members during migration. Being caught between two distinct ways of life can deeply impact children's identity formation. Conflicting guidance and signals from school and home can divide children and their parents. Vietnamese teenagers, in particular, encounter challenges in defining their identity and aspirations, leading to ambivalence and instability. Studies have linked the adverse outcomes of mental health issues in adolescents caused by acculturation to low self-esteem and depression.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. **Intergenerational Gaps by Cultural Expectation**

Cultural expectations greatly impact intergenerational cultural dissonance, which Choi and her team see as “a predictor of attrition in positive parent-child bonding, which impacts family cohesion and satisfaction.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Vu and Rook's study concludes that acculturation challenges lead to parent-child conflict and weaken positive parent-child bonding, especially between generations.[[13]](#footnote-13) These acculturative discrepancies often leave parents feeling alienated and fearful that their children are becoming detached from their heritage culture.[[14]](#footnote-14)

However, with experience and effort in adapting to a new land and culture, some Vietnamese immigrant families are gradually experiencing a positive shift in their expectations and support for their children's education and lifestyle choices. Previous literature often highlights negative outcomes resulting from parental expectations pushing their children to overachieve.[[15]](#footnote-15) However, recent research suggests that Asian American students value parental input and support when making decisions about college majors and careers, with a harmonious personal-parental relationship being vital for a positive college experience.[[16]](#footnote-16) Vietnamese college students have reported having more freedom to choose their majors compared to their older siblings. While Asian families tend to steer children toward STEM majors, like law, medicine, or engineering, Vietnamese children are now encouraged to discuss their interests, strengths, and weaknesses with their parents. Parents expect their children to fulfill their academic paths as a reflection of family obligations and expectations. Scholars such as Margaret U. Dsilva and Lisa O. Whyte believe that the distinctive nature of Asian American communities, as they navigate their gender, generational, cultural, and social identities between individualist and collectivist societies, allows for the identification of strengths inherent in collective perspectives that are culturally ingrained within these communities.[[17]](#footnote-17)  
 Parental expectations, particularly regarding gender roles, often lead to family conflicts. In conservative families, daughters are expected to assume more household responsibilities and chores than sons. Although Vietnamese families in the diaspora still follow this traditional path, girls now have more opportunities for education, achieving higher social statuses, and pursuing their American dreams. However, the triple expectations for girls to fulfill household duties, excel academically (especially in demanding fields like medical school), and provide financial support for their parents have placed significant pressure on women. Vietnamese men also face challenges when relocating to the United States, such as losing social status, careers, material possessions, friends, and relatives. As a result, some men have struggled with alcoholism and depression, leading to instances of child and spousal abuse. Phan describes many Vietnamese men as having diminished authority, challenged masculinity, and a disrupted self-identity.[[18]](#footnote-18)

1. **Intergenerational Gaps by Communication**

A communication gap exists within Vietnamese American families when parents and children have disparate communication styles. Dsilva and Whyte have observed that communication methods differ between individualistic and collectivistic societies.[[19]](#footnote-19) Vietnamese parents come from a collectivistic society where the needs of others take precedence, and they rarely express or foster pleasurable emotions in themselves or their children. Parents, especially fathers, are seldom taught to express their feelings or stand out within their family or group. On the other hand, their children grow up in an individualistic society that encourages the expression of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Vietnamese Americans may communicate more verbally, whereas their parents prefer a non-verbal style. Additionally, Vietnamese American families differ in how they address and manage conflicts. For example, a study shows that.

Vietnamese refugees reported that living in harmony was important to them, and they, therefore, tended to deal with their conflicts indirectly, using an avoidant style. A person in an individualistic society may be more competitive and confrontational and, therefore, ready to use a direct communication style than an individual from a collectivistic society. These differences in communication styles affect the Vietnamese parent-adolescent relationship in that adolescents may prefer direct communication and open expression of feelings. In contrast, the parents may want to avoid discussing conflictual issues."[[20]](#footnote-20)

Vietnamese parents' collective communication style often clashes with their children's preference for a more individualistic approach, resulting in conflicts that adversely affect family relationships and adolescents' self-perception. As mentioned in prior research, allowing children to express their opinions and disagreements can enhance family dynamics. Phinney and Ong hypothesized that the quantity of disagreements between parents and adolescents affects adolescents' life satisfaction. Vietnamese culture favors parental authority more than children's voices and rights in cases of dispute. As a result, adolescents lack the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings or even share a reason for family conflicts.[[21]](#footnote-21) Vietnamese parents might take an authoritative position and blame their children for family disharmony when their children talk back to them. This study concludes that "the larger the amount of disagreement, the lower the life satisfaction reported by adolescents.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Language can be a source of poor communication. Vietnamese refugees and immigrants who arrived in the U.S. after 1975 often needed to teach their children Vietnamese since they focused on survival and integration into an English-speaking society. Consequently, extended Vietnamese families face communication challenges when grandparents and parents struggle to express themselves adequately in English, creating a communication gap. Vietnamese children, fluent in English and better versed in American social institutions, struggle to fully express themselves in their native language, further complicating matters. This disparity leads to conflict and misunderstandings as older generations fear losing authority and becoming dependent on their children. Vietnamese parents, lacking language skills and cultural understanding, feel disappointed and powerless.

Studies conducted in the United States have shown that Vietnamese immigrant families with adolescent children experience lower-quality family relationships[[23]](#footnote-23) and more significant generational gaps[[24]](#footnote-24) compared to non-immigrant families. Nguyen & Williams (1989) identified cultural conflicts due to traditional Asian collectivism.[[25]](#footnote-25) Intergenerational gaps among Vietnamese American families harm family dynamics, relationships, and children's development. Vietnamese adolescents who cannot effectively communicate with their parents exhibit behavioral problems, engage in risky behaviors, and suffer from depression and anxiety. Parents also feel ashamed and lack confidence in engaging with others and assimilating into American culture when they cannot communicate sufficiently in English with their children. Vietnamese adolescents are expected to balance maintaining family bonds with the challenges of acculturation and individuation, leading to gaps in their identity formation and family relationships. As a result, both parents and children face considerable barriers and stress as they strive to preserve their cultural identity and family ties in a new country. To improve family communication and relationships, family members must be aware of intergenerational gaps due to poor community, different styles, and language and make efforts to bridge these gaps. The following section offers ways to bridge the gaps and transform family dynamics rooted in conflict transformation.

**V. LITERATURE REVIEW OF CONFLICT THEORY**

Conflict is a fundamental aspect of human society, arising from various factors such as economic disparities, social change, cultural development, psychological growth, and political structures.[[26]](#footnote-26) Conflicts occur due to differences in individuals' desires and perspectives. According to scholars in peace studies, conflicts include disputes, competitions, and debates. Conflicts inevitably occur whenever individuals' needs or goals still need to be fulfilled.[[27]](#footnote-27) Morton Deutsch distinguished between destructive and constructive conflicts, deeming the former undesirable while recognizing the latter as a necessary and valuable element for human creativity.[[28]](#footnote-28) Therefore, the conflict is neutral, with its constructiveness dependent on our responses. Since the 1950s, conflict resolution theory has been employed to address conflicts through diplomatic means, dialogue, and problem-solving. Conflict resolution aims to transform actual or potential violent conflicts into non-violent processes that generate social and political change. This task is ongoing due to the evolving nature of conflicts.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Acknowledging the significance of power imbalances and structural injustices as primary sources of conflict, a pressing need exists for a paradigm shift toward conflict transformation, which is regarded as an extension of the conflict resolution tradition rather than a separate endeavor.[[30]](#footnote-30) John Paul Lederach differentiates between the two models based on their objectives. Conflict resolution primarily focuses on content, seeking immediate solutions and de-escalation, while conflict transformation focuses on relationships and entails long-term processes aimed for constructive change.[[31]](#footnote-31) Furthermore, Lederach proposes embracing conflict as an ongoing dynamic that can foster constructive change, enhance life, and catalyze personal growth.[[32]](#footnote-32) Similarly, Christian ethicist Ellen Ott Marshall asserts that conflict is intrinsic to human existence, stating, "To be is to be in conflict" or "We are created within a world that is interconnected and ever-changing; conflict is an integral part of this process. We cannot choose whether or not to exist in conflict, but we can choose how to respond to it."[[33]](#footnote-33)

Lederach, Marshall, and Miall, alongside numerous others, perceive conflicts as opportunities for positive transformation. Marshall urges readers to seek God's presence and apply feminist ethics of care when navigating conflicts, drawing on the theological conviction of *Imago Dei*. Her Christian ethical perspective on conflict transformation empowers individuals to approach conflicts with responsibility and care, considering the complexity of human needs and fears during such times. Conflict is not inherently sinful or imbued with vice, as some Christians may believe. Conflict transformation teaches us that conflict is neutral, while our responses ultimately define our virtuous or sinful character. The topic of how immigrant families and individuals can cultivate virtue within the context of problems and conflicts is often overlooked. "By applying the lens of conflict transformation to Scripture, we can identify virtues that guide us in behaving well amid ongoing conflict."[[34]](#footnote-34) As families strive to recover from war or build better lives, they can develop greater virtue. Adopting this positive perspective on conflicts, we can explore how conflict transformation can enhance relationships within immigrant families among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**VI. Implementing Conflict Wisdom as a Resource to Transform Intergenerational Conflicts**

Vietnamese American families have different approaches to facing and managing conflicts. Some choose to avoid conflicts, while others confront them inappropriately.   
Through my research and ministry, conflict wisdom can be a potential source for approaching intergenerational conflicts. This term implies the knowledge, lessons, and practices drawn from conflict theory, conflict resolution, or transformation. Theologian Heather M. Dubois also mentioned the term conflict wisdom as intellectual resources proposed by peace studies and conflict theory authors such as Cecilia Lynch, Elle Ott Marshall, Kyle B.T. Lambete, and Atalia Omerin in transforming conflicts.[[35]](#footnote-35) Conflict wisdom helps immigrant families examine the underlying dynamics within their intergenerational conflicts. By exploring their family history before and after immigration, reflecting on their cultural and religious heritage, and understanding how their parents nurtured their faith formation, families can gain insights to resolve and transform their conflicts.

1. **Applying Conflict Wisdom to Address Intergenerational Conflict Due to Acculturation**

To effectively address intergenerational conflicts arising from acculturation, individuals can employ three lenses proposed by Lederach in approaching conflicts. First, understanding the situation comprehensively is essential by engaging in open communication, expressing concerns, and actively listening to and acknowledging each other's perspectives without assigning blame or judgment. Second, it is crucial to delve deeper into the underlying patterns within the relationship. Last, analyzing the problem and its relational patterns using a conceptual framework that integrates the first two lenses, as recommended by Lederach, can yield valuable insights.[[36]](#footnote-36) Using these lenses, immigrant families can better understand people's behaviors before taking action or proposing solutions. Embracing conflict wisdom means recognizing the importance of approaching situations differently. It allows families to explore the root causes and influences of the conflict while respecting each other's cultural values. Resolving conflicts requires understanding family traditions and historical perspectives, proposing solutions, and evaluating the case from personal, cultural, relational, and structural angles using Lederach's framework for a holistic perspective on conflict transformation.

Families are encouraged to embrace the differences that emerge from acculturation, address their fears openly, and learn how to respond to each other's needs.[[37]](#footnote-37) Parents may express concerns about their children adopting Western culture, and children can openly share emotional needs and shared experiences that may have been suppressed due to the Vietnamese culture's tendency to hide emotions and affection. Using accommodating or collaborating styles can strengthen family bonds.

Conflict wisdom plays a pivotal role in fostering trust among immigrant families. Research suggests that trust between parents and children may decline over time due to acculturation. Establishing secure relationships is crucial for children at all stages of development as they need support to navigate the world. By serving as secure attachment figures, people build trust, create a sense of safety, nurture self-worth, and foster lasting emotional relationships into adulthood.[[38]](#footnote-38) Rebuilding trust within immigrant families enhances children's sense of security and belonging and promotes parents' self-esteem. To cultivate trust, families should approach conflicts with an open heart, guided by love, acceptance, and the ability to find peace and surrender. While parents and children may be hesitant due to fear of mistakes or not fully understanding each other, it is essential to recognize that conflict wisdom can guide during difficult times.

1. **Applying Conflict Wisdom to Address Intergenerational Conflict Due to Cultural Expectations**

Conflict wisdom assists immigrant families in adopting a dual approach that focuses on immediate action to issues within their families and long-term solutions that identify recurring conflicts and help participants understand each other's expectations.[[39]](#footnote-39) My research revealed that the primary concern among parents is their young people losing faith or becoming disengaged from the church, especially for Vietnamese American Catholic families. Adolescents and young adults in these families strive to meet their parents' religious expectations until their confirmation. Recognizing the challenges faced by immigrant Catholic families sheds light on the significant influence of societal, religious, and cultural structures on today's youth. This is important for immigrant children who may have different faith and religious expectations compared to their parents. These children may prioritize aspects of their lives that diverge from their parents' perspectives, resulting in varying views on religious identity and practice. While Vietnamese Catholic parents often define a "good Catholic" as someone who attends church regularly and completes sacramental preparation, their children may prioritize social justice issues over attending church services. However, one way Vietnamese families can support their children on their faith journey is by providing a safe space to express what aspects of their faith are meaningful to them without pressuring them to follow their parents' beliefs blindly.

According to Lederach, parents should ask more questions to support young individuals on their spiritual journey.[[40]](#footnote-40) Questions such as: How can parents and catechists better support young individuals in their faith journey? What do young people truly desire in terms of their spiritual lives? Are we actively listening to their personal stories? How can we respect children's autonomy within the context of FFF? Another example of applying conflict transformation to address conflicts arising from differing expectations is organizing family meetings where all members can connect emotionally. During these meetings, individuals dialogue, express their feelings, discuss family plans, address concerns, and even share their failures. Family members must develop the ability to recognize and navigate their emotions, as they often remind them of past conflicts. Families need to support each other in understanding how their emotional reactions of shame, fear, guilt, and anger were shaped during their childhood by familial and societal systems and cultural norms that set expectations.[[41]](#footnote-41) A practice of conflict transformation within families involves allocating dedicated time to share family expectations and hopes. By embracing these practices, families can create alternative narratives that facilitate the resolution of unresolved conflicts.

**3. Applying Conflict Wisdom to Address Intergenerational Conflict due to Communication**

Vietnamese refugees tend to address conflicts indirectly due to their emphasis on harmonious living. This contrasts with individuals from individualistic societies, who are typically more competitive and confrontational in their direct communication style. These differing communication styles impact the parent-adolescent relationship within Vietnamese families. Adolescents prefer open and direct communication, while parents avoid discussing conflict.[[42]](#footnote-42)

In peace and conflict studies, there are various recommendations for addressing intergenerational conflict caused by communication issues. These recommendations include maintaining consistency, being reliable and predictable, promoting transparent communication, sharing control, establishing shared goals and projects, and demonstrating empathy and concern for others.[[43]](#footnote-43) However, it is important to go beyond using strategies and actively work toward countering fear by fostering new ways of coexistence. Marshal also recommends a more constructive approach to managing family conflicts, moving away from avoidance. Families must cultivate mutual understanding, openness, friendship, and reliance on one another for support during difficult times. Communication presents significant challenges for Vietnamese American families, given factors such as demanding work or school schedules, limited proficiency in speaking and listening, divergent perspectives on American and Vietnamese cultures, and a tendency to attribute conflicts to language deficiencies.

During a discussion with a group of Vietnamese mothers in a faith-sharing group about intergenerational differences within their families, it became clear that many of them either actively avoided or managed these conflicts ineffectively. This led to strained family relationships and weakened parent-child bonds. To raise awareness of these conflicts and find ways to improve the situation, families must recognize that addressing conflicts effectively requires clear communication and a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives. This transformation can only occur when the family environment becomes a learning community where family members can rebuild trust and cultivate respect by developing compassionate listening skills.

"How can we live a virtuous life amidst ongoing conflicts?"[[44]](#footnote-44) Both parents and children can start by engaging in meaningful communication. Marshal suggests using "dialogue as a space for learning" to enrich conversations.[[45]](#footnote-45)Authentic listening allows us to be fully present without judgment or seeking flaws. As conflicts within the family intensify, the importance of listening with an open heart grows. As Marshal puts it: "This kind of listening demands discipline, allowing us to create space to receive what the other person shares, even if it is something we may not want to hear."[[46]](#footnote-46)

Family members must be mindful of their internal dialogues to navigate intergenerational conflicts during challenging discussions. Active listening allows us to gain insight into the thoughts, emotions, and inquiries of our loved ones. However, listening should not be seen as interrogation. Parents can learn to listen intently and transform conflicts through two-way communication. We foster open dialogue and mutual understanding by understanding our children's perspectives. Parents and children can deepen their comprehension of each other's viewpoints by cultivating a curious mindset and averting misunderstandings and baseless accusations.[[47]](#footnote-47) Listening helps us grasp others' narratives without trying to fix or alter them. Ultimately, reclaiming our equilibrium and letting go of the desire to control others' reactions frees us from perfectionism and shame.

Family, church leaders, and educators can collaborate to leverage conflict wisdom in the context of Faith Formation and Family (FFF). As a researcher specializing in PAR, I am aware of the limitations of my knowledge when supporting Vietnamese immigrant families and their utilization of conflict wisdom in FFF. There have been instances where I have been too hasty in seeking solutions without fully understanding the unique circumstances of individuals. Looking back, I regret not asking more probing questions to understand their identities and emotions better. Due to time constraints, my research has primarily focused on the first, 1.5, and second Vietnamese generations. However, to address these issues effectively, it is essential to consider the perspectives of parents and children beyond ethnic boundaries, including the third and fourth generations. We must move beyond simply addressing gaps and conflicts and instead develop a comprehensive faith formation model. My future research will explore strategies to restore and transform family relationships. This will involve assisting parents and children in recognizing and appreciating their diverse perspectives, offering programs that teach practical communication skills for navigating difficult conversations, and rebuilding trust. Furthermore, faith formation must embrace a shift from international gaps to intergenerational wisdom in FFF, where traditions are negotiated as an ever-evolving process. New family traditions emerge within specific social contexts and constraints. Therefore, further research is needed to facilitate sharing wisdom and experiences across generations, strengthen family bonds, and foster a sense of continuity.

**CONCLUSION**

This research examines intergenerational conflict, proposing strategies for utilizing conflict wisdom to achieve positive outcomes in family dynamics. Resolving and transforming conflicts involves creating a learning environment where families view conflicts from a new perspective and respond constructively. It also provides a space for addressing intergenerational gaps, trauma, challenges and provides support and resources for families affected by conflict or displacement. Conflict transformation occurs through teaching and guiding families toward alternative conflict approaches. Failure to address these gaps will result in inadequate FFF.

Catechesis and religious education should exhibit cultural sensitivity and sustainability, providing family-based catechesis. This enables religious educators and ministers to understand their challenges rooted in intergenerational conflicts, their needs, and their motivation to sustain and enhance their narratives and traditions. This recognition allows them to navigate the integration of narratives and traditions, accompanying immigrant families in transmitting their faith and values to children and youth in diasporic contexts. The ongoing process of transmitting the faith from one generation to another is crucial in FFF and can yield fruitful results when generational conflicts are addressed and transformed.

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