

## **Support for Vietnamese Families of Illicit Drug Users**

A paper presented by John Byrne, PhD Research Student, Australian Catholic University

### **Abstract**

*The Vietnamese community is one of the largest culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia. Over the past decade, this community has the focus of much government and community concern, largely due to the involvement of its young people in the illicit drug industry. Up to this point in time much of the attention given to illicit drug issues in the Vietnamese community has not affected any significant change in the situation.*

*A government-funded research project is now underway in Melbourne to explore the impact of illicit drugs on Vietnamese-Australian family members and how they may be better supported in responding to this situation. The research is being conducted through the Melbourne campus of the Australian Catholic University, in partnership with Mary of the Cross Centre.*

*An action research approach has been adopted to maximise the potential for members of the Vietnamese-Australian community, in collaboration with ethno-specific and mainstream drug and family services, to be involved in the development, ownership and outcomes of the research project. The research design is innovative and aimed at producing major benefits for members of the Vietnamese-Australian community, along with the government and community sectors.*

*The intent of this conference presentation is to share a model of research that has been developed in keeping with the principles of working with CALD communities. A number of pertinent issues, including ones relating to methodology and ethics, will be raised during the presentation to reinforce the necessity for this type of research to be culturally sensitive, inclusive and relevant. The presentation will also raise practice and policy implications for agencies to consider in relation to researching the Vietnamese and other CALD communities.*

### **Origins of the Research Project**

A pilot study 'Experiences within the Family of Non-using Siblings of Illicit Drug Users' was undertaken by Australian Catholic University and Mary of the Cross Centre in 2001. The focus of the study was on Vietnamese families of Illicit drug users located in the Melbourne metropolitan area. A series of interviews/focus groups were conducted with Vietnamese parents, young people and service providers. The outcomes were documented and used to secure funds from the federal Department of Education, Science and Training's (formerly DETYA) ARC Linkage Grant Program for a research project that would further explore the support needs of Vietnamese families of illicit drug users.

The Australian Catholic University and Mary of the Cross Centre were successful in their application, and the research project, 'Support for Vietnamese Families of Illicit Drug Users' commenced in 2003. In addition to focusing on the non-drug using members of Vietnamese families, the research will involve drug and family agencies in identifying access issues for servicing the needs of non-drug using Vietnamese family members and explore strategies for providing more culturally relevant and sensitive support.

### **Rationale for the Research Project**

The Vietnamese community is one of the largest culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia. According to figures from the 1996 Australian Census, first and second generation Vietnamese totalled 197,800, making it the fourth largest overseas-born community in Australia (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2000). Over the past decade, this community has been the focus of much government and community concern, largely due to issues such as unemployment, problem gambling, and increasingly, the involvement of its young people in the illicit drug industry.

Vietnamese involvement in the illicit drug industry has resulted in much interest from the State Government, the wider community and the print media. According to Rodd and Leber (1996) and Quek (1997), the media have spearheaded a negative reaction to the Vietnamese community. They propose that the news coverage of this particular community is disproportionately alarmist and stereotypical, and is more likely to associate Vietnamese with drugs, crime and gang-activity. Rodd and Leber in their study of Vietnamese representation in the media suggest that these negative portrayals have resulted in the community adopting a low profile and a decreased participation in the public domain (1996). Although illicit drug issues are a very real concern within the Vietnamese community, the concentrated level of interest from the mainstream may act as a factor that inhibits Vietnamese illicit drug users and their families from seeking available support.

As the research is being conducted in Victoria, data on the impact of illicit drugs within the Vietnamese community will be drawn from more localised sources. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to utilise some of this data to gain a sense of why one culturally and linguistically diverse community, above any other, has attracted so much attention in relation to illicit drug issues. The *Drugs in a Multicultural Community* report (2000) states that in 1997-98 twenty-six percent of all Victorian Juvenile Justice clients charged with one or more drug offences were registered as Vietnamese. Further to this, the report states that the numbers of Vietnamese who have entered the adult prison system has risen over a ten year period (1988-1998) from 0.5 percent 5.1 percent of the prison population. In 1997-98, fifty-three percent of the Vietnamese prisoners had drug offences and were under twenty-six years of age. These statistics are very much overrepresentations, especially when compared to the overall size of the Vietnamese community in Victoria, which comprises only 1.2 percent of the Victorian population (Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs 2002).

A search of available literature on the impact of illicit drugs on the Vietnamese community indicates that very little attention has been paid to the needs of families of Vietnamese drug users. However, in a recent report Webber suggests that these families are reluctant to seek outside support, with fear of stigmatisation being an important factor in accessing professional help (2002). To investigate this issue further, the '*Support for Vietnamese Families of Illicit Drug Users*' research project is now underway. It aims to identify the impact of Vietnamese illicit drug users on their families, the needs that emerge for non-using family members and how they may be better supported in responding to their situations.

### **A General Context to Vietnamese Families in Australia**

In 1975, there were approximately 2,500 people of Vietnamese origin resident in Australia. The numbers were made up of overseas students, business people and war orphans (who had been adopted by Australian families) (Department of

Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2000, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2001, Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, 2000).

As the protracted war in Vietnam came to a close, leading to the unification of the country under communist rule, there was an outpouring of people who sought refuge in countries such as Australia. The first wave of Vietnamese to arrive in Australia post-1975 was predominantly ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese Catholics, the middle class and/or those who had close associations with the former regime or its American allies. As refugee resettlement in Australia continued on into the 1980's, the number of refugees continued to grow and broadened the profile of those who had arrived earlier. The later arrivals represented increasing numbers of poorer, rural and less educated Vietnamese, escaping from the effects of the war, domination under a communist government and successive cycles of flooding and drought that kept people in abject poverty (Viviani, 1984).

From the mid-1980's, Australia has had a formal agreement with the Vietnamese government to allow family members of Vietnamese-Australians to migrate under the Vietnamese Family Reunion Program. This heralded the beginnings of a second major wave of Vietnamese settlement in Australia (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1999). Events emerging from 1987 to the present time, however, have impacted greatly on many Vietnamese families who have sought refuge in Australia; looking for peace, safety and a better life.

Viviani, in her book 'from burnt boats to barbecues: The Indochinese in Australia 1975-1995' paints a much bleaker picture of many people who make up this second wave of Vietnamese resettlement. Downturn in the Australian economy (exacerbated by the severe economic recession in the late 1980's), the restructuring of industry, growing inequity in the distribution of income have had an 'extreme' impact on many of these second-wave Vietnamese (1996). Viviani goes on to state that "on almost every measure these changes have had a more profound effect on the Indochinese than on almost any other group of people in Australia" (1996, p.2). At the time of writing her book, Viviani notes that Vietnamese-Australians had the highest rate of unemployment (three times higher than the Australian-born population), apart from the indigenous population. They were the most frequent targets of racist behaviour and, overall, were more socio-economically disadvantaged than those who arrived in the country earlier on (1996).

Other issues can be layered onto the life experiences of the many Vietnamese people in Australia. The sensationalist media coverage, reported by Leiber and Rodd, often depicts Vietnamese-Australians in an aggressive and negative light. The stories of the high-achieving and high-ranking Vietnamese students in the education system has largely given way to Vietnamese adults and gambling issues or Vietnamese young people's involvement in gang activity and the illicit drug industry (1997). In addition, discussions with workers in the community sector, combined with 20 years of personal experience in working with the Vietnamese-Australian community in Melbourne, indicate that the amount of family breakdown within this community has become a significant factor. This proposition is supported by both Viviani (1996) who makes mention of the steadily increasing separation and divorce rates occurring within Vietnamese-Australian families and by Thomas (1999) in reference to the rising fragmentation in these families.

In terms of the current situation, the outflow of refugees from Vietnam has ceased, and the numbers arriving in Australia under the Vietnamese Family Reunion Program are dwindling (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1999). However, the Vietnamese currently make up the fourth largest culturally and linguistically diverse

community in Australia – 1996 Census data indicates 151,058 Viet Nam-born persons in Australia, plus 46,754 second generation persons, giving an estimated total figure of 197,812 (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2000). This figure equates to approximately 1% of the overall Australian population. It has been raised in this section of the research proposal for comparative reasons, to highlight the emergence of a recent phenomenon: illicit drug use and trafficking, within the Vietnamese-Australian community.

Illicit drug issues, particularly the transportation, trafficking and use of heroin, have, in recent years, dogged the Vietnamese community in Australia. It is the younger members of the Vietnamese-Australian community who are implicated as being prominent in the illicit drug industry, supported by the findings of Leiber and Rodd (1997), Thomas (1999), Viviani (1996). Higgs et al (1999) also allude to the impact of heroin on Vietnamese-Australian young people in terms of its growth as a major issue, its health effects and its consequent effect on the incarceration rates of these young people. These findings not only support the earlier views of Viviani (1996), but are in line with the substantial anecdotal evidence from key informants (managers and staff of the juvenile justice centres and units) throughout Victoria. Over the past decade, 1994 – 2003, the numbers of young Vietnamese-Australian in touch with the court and juvenile justice systems has risen sharply. At times, Vietnamese-Australian young people have made up between 25-33% of the juvenile justice population at some juvenile justice centres and units. According to the key informants, over 90% of those in the system are there for drug-related offences. In the Department of Human Services report 'Drugs in a Multicultural Community: An Assessment of Involvement (2000), the total number of Vietnamese clients being supervised by the Juvenile Justice System in 1997-98 was 7% of the Juvenile Justice population and 84% of these had committed drug offences. The official figures, although significantly lower than the anecdotal information, still clearly demonstrate a significant Vietnamese overrepresentation, especially when compared to the 1.2 percent representation their community has in the overall Victorian population figures.

There is also an emerging pattern arising in the adult prison system, according to a trends and issues paper compiled by the Australian Institute of Criminology (2000), Vietnamese-Australian representation in the correctional system was below that of the Australian prison population in 1988. Over the following 10 years, until 1998, Vietnamese representation has almost tripled (2000). The emerging pattern is similar to that of young Vietnamese-Australians in the juvenile justice system. As for their younger cohort, those who are remanded or sentenced are more likely to have committed drug offences than other 'offence types.'

If this alarming situation is added to issues such as unemployment, problem gambling, family breakdown, racism and discrimination and other social and economic disadvantage that significant numbers of Vietnamese-Australian families have to contend with, the need for relevant and appropriate support must be placed high on the agenda for urgent attention. However, being conscious of the dangers of stereotyping, it should be said that illicit drug use is not only restricted to families that fit the former profile. Illicit drugs are also capable of impacting on families that are well-settled, well-established and well-to-do. It must also be stated that not all Vietnamese-Australian families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage will be affected by illicit drug issues within the family either.

It has been well-documented (Bertram and Flaherty 1992; Byrne 1997; Byrne 2000) over the years that many culturally and linguistically diverse communities face difficulties in accessing support for a whole range of issues, more so for highly sensitive and controversial issues associated with illicit drugs. This applies to both

young people and adults and is reflected in the research findings of Byrne (2000), Do (2001) and Webber (2002). Broadly speaking, Vietnamese families believe there is information and support that can be accessed, however, many still claim that to disclose the problem of a family member with illicit drug issues and drawing attention to the fact that the family is not coping with the situation brings the family's reputation into question: loss of face and gossip within the community.

Even if there is knowledge of community services and available support, language difficulties, unfamiliarity with the concepts of counselling and treatment, and apprehension about accessing these services, amongst other reasons, act as barriers to making use of this support (Bertram and Flaherty 1992; Byrne 1997; Byrne 2000; Ngo 2001). These authors also suggest the need for mainstream services to play a more active role in making their services more culturally sensitive and inclusive if they are to become accessible to a broader range of groups in the community, including Vietnamese families of illicit drug users.

In struggling to deal with a family member and his/her illicit drug issues, some Vietnamese families have resorted to sending the member to Vietnam for varying periods of time. Whether it is in response to reaching a crisis point or a belief that it is a more culturally relevant course of action, returning to Vietnam has become an increasingly popular strategy for Vietnamese-Australian parents. Both Vietnamese and Australian workers have reported an increasing incidence in the number of young Vietnamese-Australians with illicit drug issues being sent to Vietnam by their families, to remove them from their networks and their dependency on heroin. Ngo (2001) suggests that this tactic is fraught with much difficulty. Some young people do seem to benefit from their time in Vietnam, whereas many others either continue using heroin in Vietnam or resume shortly after returning to Australia.

The consequences, especially for parents are multiple. Stress and hardship resulting from having to raise the funds for the trip, the uncertainty as to what is happening to the young person in Vietnam and the disappointment experienced when he/she relapses, adds to the worry and concern the family already carries. In addition, a recent outcome of taking up the option of going to Vietnam is the increasing number of young people who are returning to Australia with blood-borne viruses, such as Hepatitis C and HIV, contracted through needle-sharing. Byrne (1999), Ngo (2001) and Webber (2002) have made reference to these or related issues in their recent works, indicating that these experiences provide another reason for focusing on appropriate support in Australian settings for Vietnamese family members of an illicit drug user as both necessary and pressing.

Vietnamese-Australian families and their community are not alone in their concerns and struggle to deal with family members who are illicit drug users. Preliminary findings by Byrne (1999), of an investigation carried out in North America, Europe and Vietnam indicate that illicit drug use within Vietnamese families is the cause of great consternation. Further attention needs to be paid to parallel situations, particularly any initiatives that have been applied to supporting Vietnamese families of illicit drug users.

### **Research Framework**

The epistemology selected for the research project is a combination of Constructionism and Constructivism. It has been chosen as the direction the researcher will take in building knowledge of the experiences of Vietnamese families of illicit drug users, and establishing a more accurate account of their realities (Bessant and Watts 2002).

The use of constructionism lends its meaning to the view that Crotty puts forward in the 'Foundations of Social Research:' "[A]ll knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (1998).

However, the bottom line, as Crotty (1998) puts it, is 'the way things are' is only 'the sense of what we make of them.' In light of this, it is also important to regard our sense of meaning and reality as "historically and culturally effected interpretations rather than eternal truths of some kind" (Crotty 1998: 64). In understanding this, it is therefore, feasible that different people have a lived experience of different worlds imbued with separate meanings, realities and ways of knowing.

Although constructionist epistemology provides a solid foundation for this research, it still does not cover all of the considerations deemed essential in working with Vietnamese-Australians. Even if the researcher takes on the standpoint of the 'other' (Vietnamese-Australian families) there is a danger of replacing one collective world view, or cultural view, with another. It may very well prevent seeing the importance of, as Crotty terms it, *the meaning-making activity of the individual mind* (1998: 58), which is, in essence, the crucial dimension of constructivism. It is about the individual engaging with the world and its phenomena and making sense of it all for themselves – it is a challenge to the notion of 'enculturation.'

In terms of the research topic, 'Support for Vietnamese-Australian Families of Illicit Drug Users,' consideration has to be given to both constructionist and constructivist epistemologies. There is a concern that if members of these families were researched for the meanings and realities coming out of a 'Vietnamese social world' (constructionist position) only, it would not truly reflect their current and individual experiences in leaving Vietnam and settling in Australia (constructivist position).

On the one hand, a solely constructionist view of the findings of the research could be misinterpreted or generalised, that is, illicit drug use might be a common practice within Vietnamese families, or that Vietnamese families in Australia are the same as Vietnamese families in Vietnam. It may also infer that once Vietnamese are enculturated in their 'Vietnameseness' (Vietnamese world view), it would be impossible for them to change or to see things from another perspective. From a researcher's or reader's point of view, it may make them 'unknowable.' Another possibility is that if the younger members of Vietnamese families have been acculturated into the Australian mainstream society, or into the illicit drug using sub-culture, the idea of parents coming to understand differences in their child's world view/social reality may seem insurmountable.

On the other hand, taking a constructionist approach will facilitate the researcher setting aside a world view that has been constructed from growing up in Australia and the experiences emanating from that, and looking afresh at new worlds of social meaning and reality, thus diminishing the role of bias in the research.

The benefit of incorporating a constructivist approach into the research dissuades unhelpful generalisations. In regard to this research project, therefore, the researcher's standpoint will be, firstly, that not every Vietnamese family will necessarily be confronted with illicit drug use issues within the family. Secondly, the reactions of Vietnamese-Australian families impacted by the illicit drug use of other family members may very well be significantly different to other families' experiences. It may also have implications on the type of support each family, or even each family member, requires.

Making use of a constructivist approach will act as a dutiful reminder to the researcher that each family contact may herald a different set of meanings and realities in relation to the topic. Further to this, is the view that meanings and realities are capable of undergoing shifts and changes, they never remain completely static.

The theoretical perspective following on from this particular epistemological choice is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionists believe it is through engagement, or interaction, with the world that a sense of meaning and reality is constructed. It is contingent upon the notion of people 'being in their world,' or a part of their world, that meaning and reality get imbued with 'social meaning and reality.' Being 'in the world' and making sense of it relies on interaction with others, and constructing meaning and reality through the use of 'symbolic tools' and their communication (Crotty 1998). Furthermore, interpretation is the other vital ingredient in the construction of social meaning, and, along with interaction, forms the core principles of symbolic interactionism (Bessant and Watts 2002; Wallace and Wolf 1999).

The sociologist, Herbert Blumer, therefore calls on the researcher who incorporates a symbolic interactionist perspective to get closer to the worlds of those being researched; to see it from the perspectives of those they encounter: "noting their problems and observing how they handle them, being party to their conversations, and watching their lives as they flow along" (Blumer 1969: 87, cited in Wallace and Wolfe 1999). It challenges us to see life from the other's point of view, or, in other words, to put oneself into the shoes of the 'other.'

## **The Role of Cross-cultural Practice and Postcolonial Theory in the Research**

As the focus of the research is directed at Vietnamese families in Australia, there are serious issues that must be taken on board in planning, conducting, analysing and writing up the outcomes of the research.

### **Cross-cultural Practice**

The process of working cross-culturally has many similarities to working with individuals or groups from within the dominant or mainstream culture of a particular place or country. However, there are also significant differences between cultural groups that have to be understood and accounted for if knowledge generated through research is to have validity and any worthwhile contribution to make. The researcher needs to be aware of cross-cultural differences and accommodate for these in the design of the research. Crotty draws attention to it when he states: "Historical and cross-cultural comparisons should make us very aware that, at different times and in different places, there have been and are very divergent interpretations of the same phenomena" (1998: 64).

The phenomenon of having an illicit drug user within a family can be a very different experience from one family to the next. So may it be for different cultural groups or communities. Attention has to be given, then, to understanding what the experience means for Vietnamese-Australian families – how it is seen in a Vietnamese--Australian socio-cultural context. Other considerations for conducting the research are:

- Having some knowledge of Vietnamese culture, and being aware of cultural diversity issues and the dangers of stereo-typing;
- Using culturally appropriate means for making contact with the families and their community;

- Making sure that the content of the questions used in the research have transferability, not just in the language used, but in their meaning;
- Opting for the most appropriate questioning technique – indirect, as opposed to direct questions;
- Compensating for cultural filters, ethnocentrism, emotions and value judgements (Matsumoto 2000);
- Acquiring good cross-cultural communication skills;
- Employing interpreters and translators, where necessary;
- Ensuring that feedback mechanisms are two-way to increase both understanding and validity of the data and analysis.

Matsumoto refers to two other issues in conducting cross-cultural research ‘equivalency’ and ‘response sets.’ Equivalency relates not only to the mutual understanding of the tools/techniques selected by the researcher, it also extends to the language, concepts, data and analysis employed, as well as the outcomes achieved in the research. Acceptance and the ultimate success of the research depend on whether it has achieved shared meaning – equivalency (2000).

The term ‘response sets’ relates to how culture, for instance, can influence the way people respond to data collection techniques (Matsumoto 1994; Matsumoto 2000). It can apply to both quantitative and qualitative methods. An example of how culture may influence the outcomes of the interview process has been gleaned from the researcher’s professional experience:

*From over 20 years of experience, it has been known that some Vietnamese-Australians will not only take time to engage in disclosing personal information about themselves, there is also a tendency to give the interviewer what they think he/she wants to hear, regardless of whether the answers are correct or not. This allows the person to steer clear of sensitive issues, prevent dishonour being brought upon the family by what is disclosed and not to disappoint the interviewer. Inquiries made to Vietnamese workers regarding this tendency elicited the response that it was a cultural trait used to prevent any of the parties involved ‘losing face.’ (Based on the researcher’s long and extensive experience in casework and counselling within the Vietnamese community.)*

Combined with action research, employing a cross-cultural approach gives the researcher many opportunities to test the data and its analysis for accuracy and, ultimately, validity, through the feedback and reflection phases of the process. (This could easily apply to some of the community agencies that may participate in the research, in terms of not wanting to disclose ineffective practices, or failing to make their particular service accessible to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.)

### **Postcolonial Theory**

Post-colonial theory adds its relevance to this research. Although much of the literature around ‘post-colonialism’ has focused on the impact of foreign domination on countries, developments in these countries since independence and the effects of globalisation (Dyer 1997; Latouche 1996; Moore-Gilbert 1997; Said 1991), the discourse arising out of it has clear implications for writing about the ‘other.’ The ‘other,’ in the Australian context can refer to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, especially those who came from histories of colonial domination, and, more specifically, to the Vietnamese who will be the focus of this research.

The challenge for the researcher is to generate or contribute something to metatheory that is not complicit with “dominant, neo-colonial regimes of knowledge”

(Moore-Gilbert 1997: 3). Instead, measures need to be taken not to travel down the road of 'essentialising' culture or 'universalising' people's experience of being Vietnamese, for instance.

Consequently, the research has to be guided in its data collection, analysis and writing up phases by the discourse emanating from post-colonialism. Care needs to be taken in the way the data is interpreted and presented to prevent, or minimise, as much as possible, what Dyer asserts: "[W]hite people claim and achieve authority for what they say by not admitting, indeed not realising, that for much of the time they speak only for whiteness" (1997: xiv).

On the question of whether one can provide a non-coercive and non-reductive representation of the 'other,' reference can be made back to the post-colonial theorists and writers. Said (1991) believes that one culture can represent another in a non-coercive or non-judgemental ways, even when there is an unequal relation of power involved. He states: "I certainly do not believe that only a black can write about blacks, a Muslim about Muslims, and so forth" (Said 1991: 322).

### **Research Methodology**

A triangulated methodology is being employed in this research. Action research and grounded theory are the chosen methodologies as they will allow for the gathering of rich data, a greater level of participant involvement, empowerment of those being researched and a substantial contribution to theory on Vietnamese families and the impact of illicit drug use.

### **Action Research**

The primary methodology will be action research, and by its very nature, will create openings for the subjects of the research to participate fully in the undertakings of the research. Action research is a non-linear methodology – it does not have to be constructed around the notion of 'one beginning and one end.' The process of defining questions, engaging in fieldwork to collect data, which are then analysed and written up as a report with recommendations is converted into a cyclical or spiralling process in action research (Wadsworth 1997).

A cycle of questions, fieldwork, analysis and reflections may result in further questions, actions and reflection, which may then need to be repeated a number of times as new and pertinent information and issues emerge. Wadsworth stresses the importance of including feedback within each cycle (1997). It should be 'two-way' feedback so that the participants, too, have an opportunity to critique and comment on the findings and analysis.

In addition, the participatory factor in action research means that 'the researched' come to better understand their situations, have input into the development of strategies to effect change, and, overall, claim a sense of ownership and share in any successful outcomes. It can be regarded as an empowering process for all involved.

The advantage of using action research methodology and its cyclical process is in the opportunities it will create for trust-building, increasing the confidence of the participants, the provision of regular feedback from those involved in the research and testing the validity of the data throughout the multiple cycles of action research.

### **Grounded Theory:**

The second methodology the research will incorporate is 'grounded theory.' In contrast to Bouma's statement of: "When we are faced with a question we formulate a theory about its answer and test it by collecting data – that is, evidence – to see if our theoretical answer works" (2000: 20), the data in this research will be used instead to inform or develop theory.

It makes sense in researching Vietnamese families of illicit drug users, where little previous research is known of, that a grounded theory approach be adopted. The discovery, development and 'provisional' verification of a substantive theory occurs through commencing with relevant questions, which flow on into systematic data collection and inductive analysis, and ending with a description and explanation that is credible, that is, valid and reliable (Denzin 1989; Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990). Grounded theory, therefore, provides the scope to explore the meanings which emanate from the research process, using the findings to expand existing theories or create new ones.

Furthermore, the researcher sees no conflict in making reference to multiple methodologies for this research. In *The Research Act*, Denzin outlines the concept of 'triangulation,' acknowledging the valid use of two or more methodologies (methodological triangulation) in the grounded research approach (1989).

### **Ethical Considerations**

1. **Involvement of participants** - voluntary basis; non-coercive.
2. **Privacy and confidentiality** - numerical tags or pseudonyms will replace the actual details.
3. **Legal implications** of disclosing illegal or criminal activity - under current legislation data can be subpoenaed for use in legal matters such as court cases.
4. **Duty of care** – appropriate response for disclosure of domestic violence, sexual assault, etc. (Although not mandated, how does the researcher respond?)
5. **Participant observation** - all participants will be informed, prior to their involvement, of what participant observation is and its role in the research. It will take place in naturalistic settings and be conducted in as open and transparent a manner as possible.
6. **All information to participants** - translated into Vietnamese. The services of an interpreter will be made available to Vietnamese-speakers who feel that their English language skills are not sufficient to fully participate in the research.
7. **Use of interpreters** – a potential threat to privacy and confidentiality if information is leaked by the interpreter. Nevertheless, the use of an interpreter will foster clearer understanding and add to the validity of the information gathered by the researcher.
8. **Research methods** - may spark off memories of the past where the activities of secret police and neighbourhood spies went about their activities in clandestine ways. (The process may result in triggering uncomfortable thoughts on issues of trust, corruption, informing, etc).

9. **Data gathering** - may also raise negative thoughts about the past for some participants. It is possible that older members of the family may recall memories of interrogation and torture/trauma situations by the questioning process.
10. Ensure the participants gain a **sense of co-ownership** through the research process being employed.

### **Research Model**

After considering all of the factors raised above, a research model has been devised in an attempt to keep the research process culturally sensitive, meaningful and appropriate for all those participating. A summary of the model has been included in this paper for further consideration as an alternative research option for CALD communities. The model is divided into five stages, with each stage linked to the next through cycles of questions, data collection, analysis, reflection, feedback and further action (*the action research cycle*).

#### **Stage 1 – Interviews and Participant Observation**

Five Vietnamese-Australian families who are experiencing, or have experienced, the impact of an illicit drug-using family member/s are being recruited to participate in the first stage of the research model. They will take part in a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which will be documented using audiotape. If language is an issue, an interpreter will be employed to assist the interview process. The first interview will include all interested family members, with subsequent interviews being conducted with adult family members and adolescent members separated into two groups. The findings will be documented and fed back to the respondents as a check for accuracy.

Five agencies that provide family and/or drug services will also be recruited to participate in Stage 1 of the research model. They will be a mix of Vietnamese and mainstream community agencies. Representatives from management and staff will be invited to participate in in-depth, semi-structured, group interviews. Again, the interviews will be audio-taped, and once the data is analysed and written up, the results will be fed back to the participants for consideration.

Participant observation has been incorporated into the research design as the study will be conducted in naturalistic, social settings with ongoing interaction between the researcher, the researched and the researched for. It is considered to be a constructive method, useful for gaining an orientation to the social settings being investigated, for increasing understanding and building trust. In essence, it will assist in heightening awareness and stimulating reflection on what is going on in the research settings. An objective distance needs to be maintained by keeping notes of the observations, and feeding questions emerging from the participant observations back into the research process.

Sampling procedure: the participating families and agencies will be recruited using non-random, purposive sampling.

#### **Stage 2 – Formation of a Community Reference Group**

Vietnamese family members and agency representatives who participated in Stage 1 of the research will be invited to continue their involvement in the study through participation in the community reference group. Other interested stakeholders will also be given the opportunity to join this group.

Respondents, who do not choose to continue on into Stage 2, will have received feedback on the findings of the interview process. They will be asked to reflect on the outcomes and to check the analysis and reconstruction of the data for meaning and accuracy. Feedback will also be offered to them throughout the remaining stages of the research, if they choose to be kept informed.

Members of the community reference group will be involved, with the researcher, in assessing the findings of the interviews conducted during Stage 1. As an action research project, collaboration between the researcher, the researched and researched for will be a key feature of the research as it unfolds through stages 3, 4 and 5. This will assist in the identification of good practice principles arising out of the analysis of data, or in response to the issues and needs raised by the respondents.

Detailed note-taking will be used to document the progress of Stage 2, and, after further analysis, reflection and feedback, be written up for inclusion in the final report.

### **Stage 3 – Development of a Good Practice Service Model**

The researcher, in collaboration with the community reference group, will use the findings of Stage 2 to develop a service model based on the good practice principles emerging from the previous stages of the research. By continuing the cycle of questioning, action, analysis and reflection, planning for the implementation and trialling of the good practice service model will occur.

Strategies to involve Vietnamese families of illicit drug users and agencies in the trial phase of the service model (Stage 4) will be developed.

Detailed note-taking will be used to document the progress of Stage 3 and, after further analysis, reflection and feedback from the community reference group and, if appropriate, the original respondents, be written up for inclusion in the final report.

### **Stage 4 – Trialling the Service Model**

Implementation of the trial will be accompanied by ongoing monitoring and evaluation. There will be a continuation of the focus on collaboration. Vietnamese families and the agencies will be invited to participate in the trialling of the service model. Those taking part will be interviewed about their experiences, outcomes and overall effectiveness of the trial.

The establishment and delivery of the service model will be documented, analysed and reflected upon. Feedback to and from the respondent groups and the community reference group will be sought before the results are integrated into the report.

Stage 4 will include an assessment of the possibilities for the service model being adopted as a permanent part of the agencies service delivery. The assessment will then be documented and included in the research report.

### **Stage 5 – Documentation of the Good Practice Service Model and Completion of the Research Report**

The process of implementing and trialling the service model will undergo a final evaluation, with the researcher facilitating a process of reflection and feedback with the community reference group and the original respondents from Stage 1, if not already represented on the reference group.

If agencies do incorporate the model as a permanent part of their service delivery, the integration and operational mechanics will be documented and incorporated into the report.

The good practice service model will be published, making it available to other agencies in their work with Vietnamese-Australian families of illicit drug users.

A completed draft of the research project will be presented to the respondent groups and the community reference group for consideration and comment, particularly in reference to the reconstruction of data, its context and meaning. After careful consideration of their responses, the final report will be produced.

### **Practice and Policy Implications for Adopting this Particular Research Model**

The intention of adopting such a research model is to maximise the participation of the Vietnamese families of illicit drug users, their community and community agencies. It validates the principles of Multiculturalism in creating opportunities for a CALD community in Australia to have the same access, equity and participation as any other resident of this country. The outcomes will endeavour to shift those still on the margins of Australian society into the mainstream, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to address the issues associated with the impact of Vietnamese illicit drug users on their non-drug using family members.

The implications are many and varied, however, the major shifts in Vietnamese family members decision-making processes in confronting the issues with appropriate actions would be a very positive outcome. Complimentary to this, recommendations emerging from the research project will provide community agencies with strategies to make their services more culturally sensitive, accessible and inclusive; providing suitable options to these families in a cross-cultural setting.

Greater collaboration with people from CALD backgrounds will provide encouragement to mainstream agencies engage in identifying different perspectives, meanings and realities; creating new understandings of CALD communities and fostering the developing of more flexible and innovative models of service delivery and support.

Finally, there are implications for policy development, both at the micro and macro levels. Again, making reference to Australia's Multiculturalism, community agencies will be provided with a framework in which to re-examine their policies to ensure that CALD issues are included and that indicators are devised for addressing the needs of the CALD communities. On the macro level, government departments would be challenged to explore their policy frameworks and consider expanding them to incorporate broader considerations in working with CALD communities in addressing such issues as the impact of illicit drugs.

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