

A Narrative Study on the Experiences of Hmong Female College Students

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A Narrative Study on the Experiences of Hmong Female College Students

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Dedication

To my parents, Cha Xia Thao and Ngia Yang: Thanks for encouraging me to make my dream a reality and providing me with the emotional and financial support to obtain my doctoral degree. I understand the struggle you two face each day and I am eternally grateful to have loving and supportive parents.

To my best friend, Soua Vang: Thanks for spending those long and endless evenings and weekends with me at Starbucks or Panera to keep me motivated and for sharing this lonely journey with me. Thanks for your encouragement.

To Hmong American women pursuing a post-secondary degree:

We are Leaders

Making dreams a reality

Creating paths for others to follow

Expanding our horizon beyond those of fore-mothers

We are Pillars

Standing tall and holding life together

Providing the support

Contributing to the whole

Acknowledgments

I recognize my committee for all the support and guidance in the process of completing my educational goals and dissertation study. Thank you, Dr. José Luis Chávez, Dr. Kathy Geller, and Dr. Ka Va for recognizing my potential and inspiring me to produce a piece of research that represents me well. I am eternally grateful for your candid feedback and collaborative spirits.

I would also like to thank the members of Cohort 9 for their support, friendship, and encouragement. I know the journey was hard for all of us and there were moments of despair but with a little support and encouragement, we were able to come together as a community.

To the Hmong American women who generously gave up their time to openly share their experiences and stories: Thank you for shedding light onto the experiences of Hmong American women in post-secondary education through your stories. I am grateful for your support.

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Abstract

A Narrative Study on the Experiences of Hmong Female College Students

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Since their settlement in the United States, Hmong American women have established themselves in professional organizations across various disciplines as lawyers, teachers, university professors, medical doctors, and political leaders. However, the data on the education achievement of Hmong American women reveal that Hmong American women have one of the lowest educational attainments. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, 20.8% of Hmong American women ages 25 and over has a bachelor or higher degree, whereas 31.9% of White women, 22.4% of Black women and 16.1% of Hispanic women the ages 25 or over.

This study will explore, through narrative inquiry, the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college or university; focusing on understanding how their gender and cultural roles influence their educational experiences. This study is guided by the following three question research questions:

1. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their educational experiences in higher education?
2. What do the stories told by Hmong American women indicate about the challenges they face with their family and culture?
3. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their identity as Hmong women?

This study will be conducted through a conceptual lens incorporating a review of the existing literature from four research streams: (a) the Hmong, (b) the educational achievement and experiences of Hmong American students, (c) Critical Race Theory, and (d) ethnic identity. It will also be conducted through the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory and the social constructivist paradigm.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

Introduction to the Problem

Hmong American women are a unique group of individuals with a distinct culture and history that has been shown to support and hinder Hmong American women from pursuing a post-secondary degree. They are also members of the ethnic group Asian American and are often mistaken as model minorities who do not need the assistance and support of education special programs to obtain educational success. A deeper investigation and review of the literature pertaining to Hmong American women, Hmong American students, Southeast Asian Americans, and Asian Americans has indicated that Hmong American women experiences challenges associated with their gender, culture, and socioeconomic status (Lee, 1997, 2001; Ngo, 2002; Riggs & Moua, 2015; Vue, 2007; Yang & Morris, 2001).

Lee (1997) conducted an ethnographic study of Hmong American women who has challenged the Hmong cultural norm to pursue a post-secondary education. Through her investigation, Lee (1997) discovered that there are cultural, economic, social and structural barriers hindering the educational advancement of Hmong American women. She noted that the most predominate challenge Hmong American women face in their pursuit towards a post-secondary education was teen marriage. Lee (1997) found that a majority of her research participants described their struggle to either postpone or engage in teen marriage due to the fear of being labelled as an old maiden. Teen marriage is commonly supported practice among the Hmong and generally occurs for Hmong girls between the age of 15 and 17 (Hutchison, 1994; Lee, 1997; McNall, 1994; Ngo, 2002;

Vang & Bogenschutz, 2014). With the influence of the American culture and economy, teen marriage has become a less common practice within the Hmong American population. As a result of this, researchers indicated that teen marriage is less likely to influence the educational experiences of Hmong American women (Hutchison & McNall, 1994; Vue, 2007).

Hutchison and McNall (1994) also investigated the influence teen marriage has on the educational experiences of Hmong American females. They focused their study on understanding the educational achievement and attitudes of Hmong female high school students. In their study, the researcher identified and interviewed married and non-married Hmong female high school students over a four-year time frame. Hutchison and McNall (1994) discovered that married Hmong female high school student display similar educational expectations/aspiration, grade point average, and English language skill. Based on their findings, Hutchison and McNall (1994) concluded that female Hmong American students' decision to engage in teen marriage and the responsibilities associated with it is not a significant factor influence their decision to pursue post-secondary education.

Vue (2007) explored the factors impeding the educational pursuits of Hmong American women in post-secondary education. She interviewed six Hmong American women pursuing a post-secondary degree and discovered that a majority of her research participant's struggle to balance their home life with their academic workload. She also discussed how the roles and responsibilities of Hmong American women has expanded from the traditional housewife to the workforce. Based her discovery, Vue (2007) concluded that Hmong American women struggled to find a balance between their roles

as a student, income provider, mother, wife, and daughter. She also concluded that the struggle to balance these roles was an essential factor hindering the educational experiences of Hmong American women.

Yang and Morris (2001) also conducted a study to explore Hmong American women's struggles to pursue a post-secondary degree. In her study, she focused on understanding the educational experiences of two female Hmong nursing student through the use of semi-structured interviews. Yang and Morris (2001) discovered that the cultural responsibilities, imposed on her research participants by their family and clan, hindered their academic performance and success. These cultural responsibilities include attending and catering family/clan events, religious practices, and funeral services on the weekends (Lor, 2013; Vue, 2007; Yang & Morris, 2001). In a similar study, conducted by Riggs and Moua (2015), the researchers discovered that Hmong American women leaders also struggled to overcome the responsibilities and roles associated with their identity as Hmong American women.

Statement of the Problem to Be Researched

Hmong American women face the challenge of negotiating their way through college or university because of their unique roles and responsibilities as Hmong women.

Purpose and Significance of the Problem

An investigation into the educational experiences of Hmong American women is crucial because a significant number of Hmong American women are primary and secondary income providers for their families (Lor, 2013). Additionally, a handful of them occupy leadership roles as state senators, organizational leaders, and business owners (Riggs & Moua, 2015; Yang, 2001; Yoshikawa, 2006). Lor (2013) noted that

Hmong American women have established themselves in professional organizations across various disciplines such as lawyers, teachers, university professors, medical doctors, and political leaders. He also indicated there are currently three well-known Hmong American women’s associations: (a) Hnub Tsiab: Hmong Women Achieving Together, (b) Professional Hmong Women’s Association, and (c) Hmong Women’s Heritage Association. However, U. S. Census data pertaining to the education achievement of Hmong American women have revealed that Hmong American women have one of the lowest educational attainments (see Figure 1). Therefore, it is crucial for researchers and scholars understand the factors hindering the educational experiences of Hmong American women to better assist and supporting their educational outcome and success.

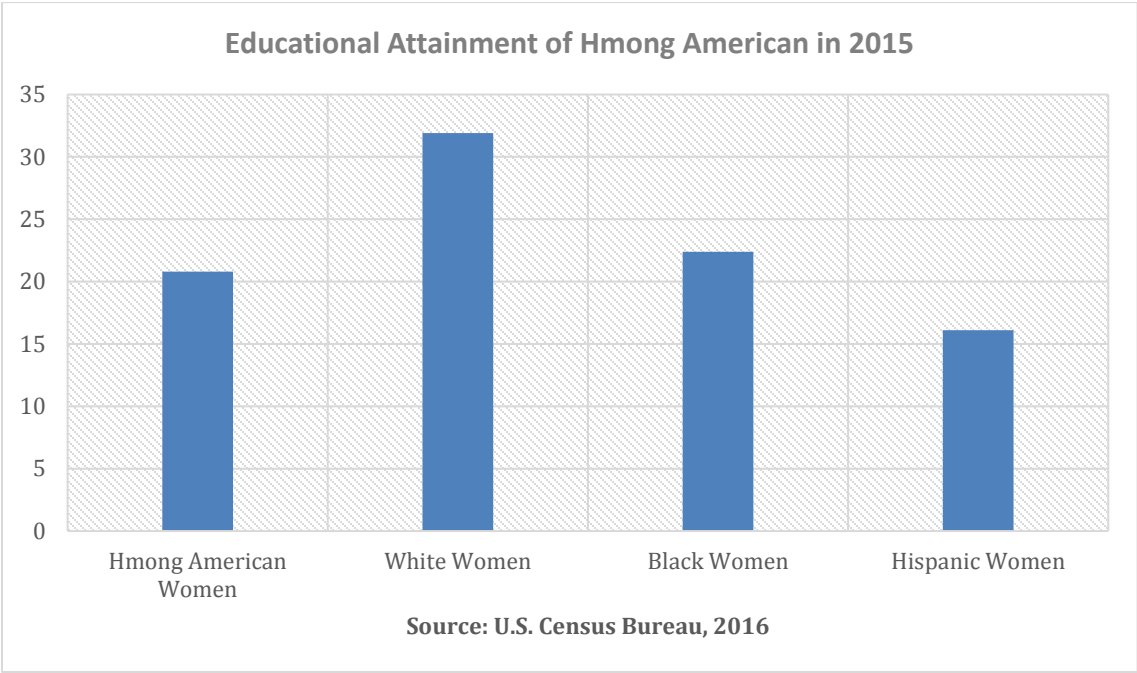


Figure 1. Educational attainment of Hmong American women in 2015.

Additionally, existing research on Hmong American women has shed light into the hindering and supporting factors associated with Hmong American women's educational pursuit. However, there no research focusing on the influence the gender and cultural roles of Hmong American women have on their educational pursuit. Thus, this study will explore, through narrative inquiry, the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college or university, focusing on understanding how their gender and cultural roles influence their educational experiences.

Research Questions

The three research questions guiding this study are:

1. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their educational experiences in higher education?
2. What do the stories told by Hmong American women indicate about the challenges they face with their family and culture?
3. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their identity as Hmong women?

Conceptual Framework

Research Stances

This research reflects the researcher's worldview as a social constructivist. This research is axiological, methodological, and ontological in design (Creswell, 2007). The axiological stance is grounded in social justice. The methodological stance is centered on collecting and analyzing stories lived and told through cultural and gender contexts. The ontological stance is anchored in the research participants' view of reality being "constructed through the interaction of the creative and interpretative work of the mind

with the physical/temporal world” (Paul, 2005, p. 46). The researcher also chooses to immerse this study in an interpretive community grounded in Critical Race Theory and Feminist/Equitist Theory to offer a detail discussion of the challenges Hmong American women face in higher education as a result of their gender, race, and ethnicity.

Experiential Basis

The researcher is a first-generation Hmong American woman who has experienced many cultural, gender, and socioeconomic challenges during her own journey in post-secondary degree programs. Thus, she has first-hand experience with these challenges. She personally has experienced challenges in pursuit of her own educational attainment. Her primary intention in conducting this research is to empower and encourage other Hmong American women to pursue their academic goals and become self-sufficient. She hopes the stories told by the research participants will persuade educational policymakers, community leaders, and researchers to better support the progression of Hmong female students in higher education.

To minimize the researcher’s voices and bias, she will be triangulating her data. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals and types of data/data collection methods into descriptive themes (Creswell, 2012). The researcher will triangulate her data among her five research participants and four different data collection methods: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) researcher’s journal (containing her observation and notes during her interviews with the research participants), (c) research participant journals, and (d) artifacts.

Conceptual Framework

This research study is framed through a conceptual framework comprised of three research streams and one theoretical lens: (a) the Hmong, (b) the educational achievement and experiences of Hmong American students, (c) Critical Race Theory and (d) ethnic identity. Each research stream draws on the existing theory and research. The first lens introduces the Hmong in terms of their culture and history. The second lens is a review of the existing literature and research on the educational experiences of Hmong students in the United States. The third research stream discusses Critical Race Theory and the model minority stereotype. The fourth stream is centered on highlighting existing literature on ethnic identity and its implications in the educational success of student of color.

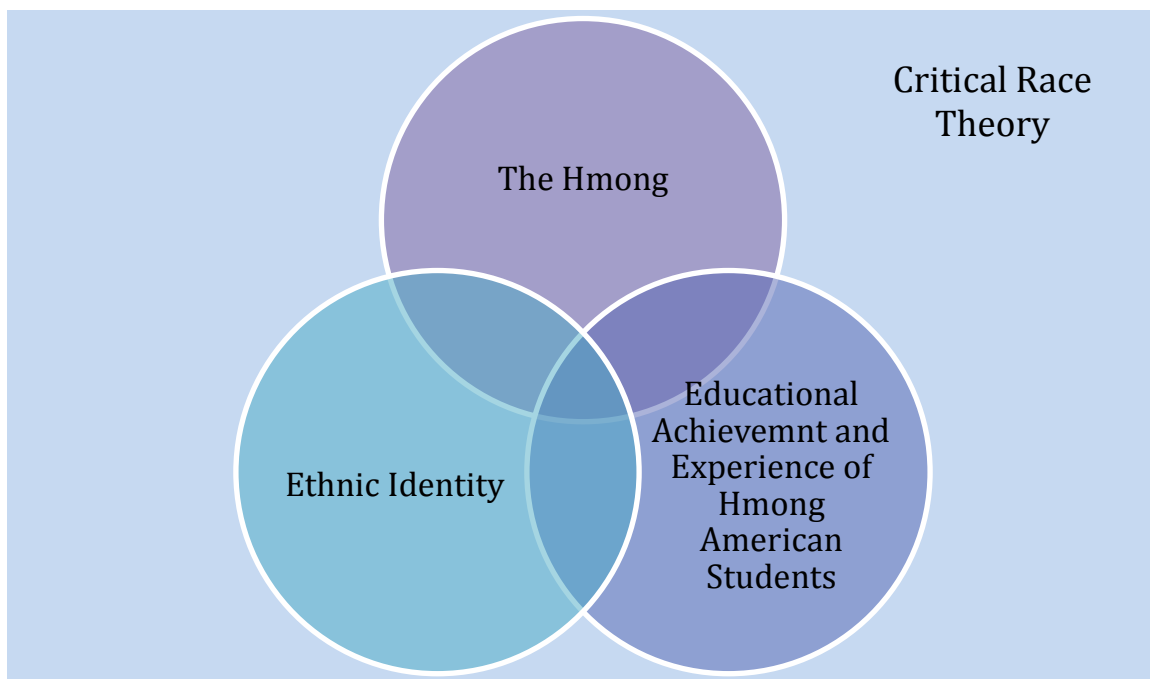


Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

The Hmong. The Hmong are a sub-ethnic group of Asian Americans who immigrated to the United States in the 1970s to escape persecution by the Pathet Lao government. Prior to their settlement in Laos, the Hmong had been known to live in China until the 16th century. According to Duffy, Roger, Ranard, Tao, and Yang (2004), the Hmong were forced out of China due to their strong commitment to not assimilate into the Chinese culture. As a result of this, the Hmong migrated south into Southeast Asian countries like Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam (Duffy et al., 2004). A significant population decided to reside in Northern Laos. In Laos, the Hmong lived in isolated hilltops away from western culture and adhered to their traditional agrarian lifestyle of farming and raising livestock (Vang & Flores, 1999).

The Hmong was known to have lived a peaceful life in Laos until the 1950s, when the French colonized Laos and issued heavy taxes in the country (Duffy et al., 2004). As a result, the Hmong rebelled against the French rule and obtained their autonomy. Despite their efforts to be left alone, the Hmong was later recruited by the United States government in the 1960s to assist in fighting the Secret War against the Pathet Lao government (Duffy et al., 2004). Due to their efforts and cooperation with the United States government, in the 1970s, the Hmong was granted immigration rights to the United States and their allied countries. Since their settlement in the United States, the Hmong has made improvements to their lives by shifting from their agrarian lifestyle to an industrial lifestyle, but they are still struggling.

The educational achievement and experience of Hmong American students.

Hmong American students come from a different culture than mainstream American culture; thus, they face the challenge of adapting and assimilating into the American

culture. Additionally, they are members of an Asian American ethnic group that is often overlooked by policymakers and educators due to the model minority stereotype (Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Yang, 2004). The model minority stereotype is the stereotypical message that Asian American students are able to obtain the American Dream without special assistance (Ngo & Lee, 2007). As a result of these two factors, Hmong American students have experienced some of the challenges similar to first-generation students, low income students, and students of color.

Critical Race Theory. Serving as a theoretical lens, Critical race theory portrayed the educational experiences of student of color through seven main tenets: (a) permanence of racism, (b) experiential knowledge/counter-storytelling, (c) interest convergence theory, (d) intersectionality, (e) whiteness as property, (f) critique of liberalism and (g) commitment to social injustice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Emerging from CRT is Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) which is comprised of four additionally tenets: Asianization, transnational contexts, (re)constructive history, and strategic (anti)essentialism (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Included in this stream is a discussion of the model minority stereotype of Asian American capable of achieving educational and financial success without special assistances (Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Ethnic identity. Ethnic identity offers group membership with a sense of belonging as a result of individuals having a common ancestry, history, traditions, language, beliefs, and values (Cokley, 2007). Existing studies, conducted to understand the influence ethnic identity has on student performance and social well-being, indicated that a student who has a higher level of ethnic pride and knowledge displays a higher level of academic performance and success (Duffy & Klingaman, 2009; Maramba &

Velasquez, 2012; Nguyen, 2013; Pizzolato, Chaudhari, Murrell, Podobnik, & Schaeffer, 2008; Schmidt, Piontkowski, Raque-Bogdan, & Ziemer, 2014). As a result, researchers have made several suggestions for higher education institutions to plan and implement diverse educational activities for students (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, & Kinzie, 2008; Ngo, 2015).

Definition of Terms

Animism

The belief that spirits and forces inhabit the natural universe (Duffy et al., 2004)

Ancestor worship

The belief of a spiritual connection between the deceased and the living (Duffy et al., 2004)

Clan

A group of individuals holding the same family name (Moua, 2011)

Critical Race Theory

A theoretical framework used to examine the unjust and unequal distribution of power and resources, along with political, economic, racial, and gender lines (Taylor, 2009)

Educational Attainment

Refers to the highest level of education an individual has completed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016)

Ethnicity

The characterization of people who see themselves as having a common ancestry, history, traditions, language, beliefs, and values (Cokley, 2007)

Ethnic identity

An ethnic group membership that offers a sense of belonging as a result of individuals having a common ancestry, history, traditions, language, beliefs, and values (Cokley, 2007)

Filial Piety

The concept of an individual being responsible, respectful, and obedient toward one's parent (Moua, 2011)

Hmong

Members of an Asian ethnic group who called themselves "Hmong." (Yang, 2001)

Hmong American

Descendants of Hmong ancestry who are now residents or citizens of the United States (Yang, 2001)

Model Minority Myth

The stereotypical message that Asian American students are able to obtain the American Dream without special assistance (Ngo & Lee, 2007)

Patriarchal

A social system in which men hold the authority and power to make decisions (Lor, 2013)

Social Constructivist

An individual who seeks to understand the world in which they live through subjective means of experiences (Creswell, 2007)

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

In conducting this research, the researcher assumes that Hmong American women have limited opportunities to tell stories about their struggles in accessing and succeeding in post-secondary education. The researcher also assumes that the academic experiences of Hmong American women differ from Hmong American men due to traditional cultural roles in the Hmong society. A third assumption the researcher makes in conducting this study is that the research participants of her study will be forthcoming in providing their stories and describing personal aspects of their lives.

Limitations

This research is limited to the voices of five Hmong American women residing in the greater Sacramento Region and does not account for the experiences of all Hmong American women. Additionally, the study will be conducted within a nine-month time frame. This short time frame limits the researcher's ability to probe deeper into the educational experiences of the research participant. Thus, this research is limited to most predominant challenges experienced by the research participants. These challenges may include cultural, gender, and race challenges.

Summary

Hmong American women successfully expanded their roles and responsibilities by establishing themselves in professional organizations across various disciplines as lawyers, teachers, university professors, medical doctors, and political leaders (Lor, 2013). The data pertaining to the education achievement of Hmong American women reveal that they have one of the lowest rates of educational attainment. According to the

2015 American Community Survey released by the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), there is a discrepancy among Hmong American women aged 25 and over who have a bachelor or higher, White women, Black women, and Hispanic women ages 25 or over.

Additionally, existing research on Hmong American women's educational experiences has revealed that Hmong American women face additional challenges as a result of their ethnicity, gender, culture, and socioeconomic status. Thus, this study will explore, through narrative inquiry, the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college or university, focusing on understanding how their gender and cultural roles influence their educational experiences. The conceptual lens framing this study is comprised of three research streams and one theoretical lens: (a) the Hmong, (b) the educational achievement and experiences of Hmong American students, (c) Critical Race Theory and (d) ethnic identity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to Chapter 2

After living in the United States for 40 years, Hmong American women are still struggling to pursue post-secondary degrees. Researchers have indicated that Hmong American women are still struggling because of their gender roles and cultural and family obligations (Lee, 1997, 2001; Ngo, 2002; Riggs & Moua, 2015; Vue, 2007; Yang & Morris, 2001). Lee (1997) discussed Hmong American women's struggles with the dilemma of engaging in teen marriage. While Vue (2007), Yang & Morris (2001), and Riggs & Moua (2015) described the struggle Hmong American women face in balancing their home life with their academic workload. Thus, this study will explore, through narrative inquiry, the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college or university, focusing on understanding how their gender and cultural roles influence their educational experiences.

Conceptual Framework

This research study is framed through a conceptual lens comprised of three research streams and one theoretical lens: (a) the Hmong, (b) the educational achievement and experiences of Hmong American students, (c) Critical Race Theory and (d) ethnic identity. Each research stream draws on the existing theory and research. The first lens introduces the Hmong in terms of their culture and history. The second lens focus on the educational experience of Hmong American students. The third research stream is will discusses Critical Race Theory and the model minority stereotype. The

fourth stream is centered on highlighting existing literature on ethnic identity and its implications in the educational success of student of color.

Literature Review

The Hmong

This research stream is designed to introduce the Hmong culture and offers an overview of the history of the Hmong people. This overview will allow for an understanding of the cultural and historical challenges Hmong American women face in their pursuit towards a post-secondary education.

History of the Hmong. The Hmong are a sub-ethnic group that immigrated to the United States in the 1970s. The origins of the Hmong can be back to China and into the third century (Duffy et al, 2004; Yang, 2002). According to various researchers, the Hmong were an isolated and proud group of individual who resisted outside governance (Duffy et al, 2004; Yang, 2002). As a result of this, the Hmong were forced to leave their “rice fields in the fertile valleys of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers” and move south toward the southern latitude (Duffy et 2004, p. 5). Within these southern areas, they were forced out of China into Southeast Asia countries like Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam in the 18th century (Duffy et al., 2004; Vang & Flores, 1999). In Laos, the Hmong resided in isolated mountain tops and continued to live their agrarian lifestyle and be self-governing.

In the 1890s the French took control of Laos and started to exploit the Hmong through taxation. This exploitation led to the Hmong’s rebellion from 1918 to 1921 (Duffy et al., 2004). After three years of battling the Hmong, the French finally agreed to grant the Hmong autonomy and allowed them to be self-governed (Duffy et al., 2004).

However, in 1954, the French lost control of Laos and left the country to the Royal Lao government and the Pathet Lao government (Duffy et al., 2004). Fearing that the North Vietnamese-backed Pathet Lao government would take control of Laos, the United States decided to intervene by launching a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operation in Laos in the 1960s (Duffy et al., 2004; Vang & Flores, 1999). The operation led to the recruitment of Hmong men and youth into a secret war, known today as the Secret War in Laos. According to Moua and Vang (2015), the Hmong men and youth recruited to participate in the war assisted in (a) disrupting the Ho Chi Minh Trail, (b) rescuing downed U.S. pilots, (c) directing and protecting American pilots as they flew into Vietnam, (d) flying planes and helicopters into enemy zones, and (e) collecting and reporting information from communist soldiers. The war lasted approximately 12 years and ended in 1973 with the United States withdrawal (Duffy et al., 2004; Moua & Vang, 2015; Vang & Flores, 1999). Once the United States withdrew, the Hmong were no longer protected, which enable the Pathet Lao government started to persecute the Hmong. To ensure survival, numerous Hmong families fled Laos to seek refuge in Thailand until they were granted immigrant rights to the United States and other western countries (Duffy et al., 2004; Moua & Vang, 2015; Vang & Flores, 1999). Today, Hmong resides all over the world, with a large population in Laos, Thailand, the United States, France, Canada, and Australia.

The Hmong culture. The Hmong culture is different from mainstream American culture because it has different values and a different governing system. The Hmong culture is often described as a patriarchal culture in which Hmong women are often devalued as a result of their gender (Lor, 2013). A closer examination of the culture

reveals that the Hmong culture has different values, gender roles, tradition, filial piety, and religious practice.

Gender roles. The Hmong culture places a significant emphasis on gender and gender roles. In the Hmong society, Hmong men and women play distinctive roles and are responsible for different duties. According to Lor (2013), Hmong women are traditionally responsible for taking care of the elders, raising the children, and other domestic duties, while Hmong men are responsible for the economic well-being of the family. Duffy et al. (2004) and Supple, McCoy, and Wang (2010) described that Hmong males are responsible for carrying on the family traditions and conducting religious practices. Some of the religious practices for which Hmong men are responsible include funeral services, wedding ceremony, ancestral worship, and New Year's celebration (Duffy et al., 2004).

Values. The Hmong society values filial piety and family reputation. Filial piety is a Confucian belief, indicating that an individual must be responsible, respectful, and obedient toward his/her parent and elders (Riggs & Moua, 2015). Filial piety manifests itself in the Hmong society through the expectation that Hmong sons and daughters-in-law will take care of their parents in their old age (Duffy et al., 2004).

Supple et al. (2010) noted that Hmong parents value children who display respect toward their elders and promote interdependence among family members. Supple et al. (2010) further described that Hmong parents value their family's reputation, noting that Hmong parents encourage and support the academic development and acculturation of Hmong males because they believe that by allowing their sons to pursue educational goals and adapt to American society, their son will be able to bring fame to the family

(Supple et al., 2010). Also, Hmong parents place restrictions on and regulate the social interaction of their daughters because they fear their daughters will engage in sexual behavior and bring shame to their family. As a result of this, Hmong girls were often forced to engage in teen marriage to prevent Hmong girls from bringing shame to the family (Lee, 1999; Lor, 2013).

Governing system/Social structure. In addition to differing values, the Hmong population has both a unique governing system and religious practice. The Hmong culture operates through a clan-based system in which the nuclear family is comprised of the parents and children (Moua, 2001). Extending from this nucleus is the sub-clan and clan. The sub-clan is comprised of families with the same ancestor worship and religious practices. The clan is a group of individuals who hold the same clan name (Moua, 2001). Figure 3 is an illustration of the Hmong clan structure.

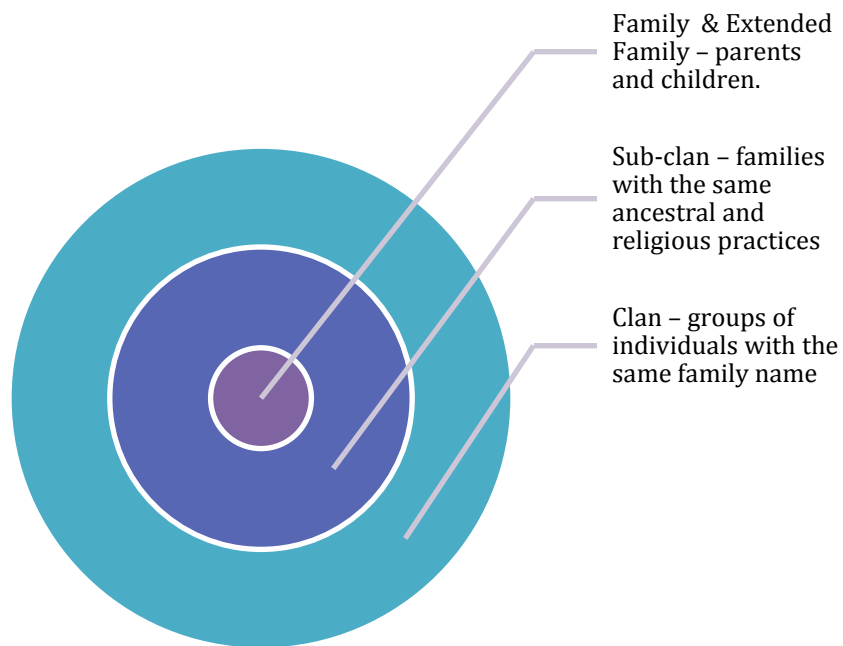


Figure 3. The Hmong clan structure.

In Hmong society, there are 18 primary clans: Cha, Cheng, Chu, Fang, Hang, Her, Khang, Kong, Kue, Lor/Lo, Lee, Moua, Thao, Vang, Vue, Xiong, and Yang (Lor, 2013; Moua, 2001; Vang & Flores, 1999; Yoshikawa, 2006). Each clan is governed by a clan leader. Clan leaders are usually older men who possess the knowledge of animism and ancestor worship practices (Moua, 2001). They are also generally responsible for making political and cultural decisions and serving as mediators between families, sub-clans, and clans to resolve disputes and carry out marriage customs (Moua, 2001).

Religious beliefs. The Hmong religion is a combination of animism and ancestor worship. Animism is “the belief that spirits and forces inhabit the natural universe” (Duffy et al., 2004, p. 14) while ancestor worship is the belief that there is a spiritual connection between the deceased and the living (Duffy et al., 2004). Through these two

belief systems, the Hmong has established several cultural practices that link and distinguish each clan and sub-clan. Duffy et al. (2004) commented that within the Hmong culture, there are four rites of passage rituals: soul calling and naming ceremony, wedding ceremony, the honorific naming of the young father and mother, and the funeral. In addition to these rites of passage rituals, there are three rituals or practices known as “ua neeg,” “npua dab roog,” and “nyuj dab” (Duffy et al., 2004).

Language. The Hmong language is an oral language that was not written down until the 1950s using the French letter (Duffy et al., 2004). According to Vang (2003) there are multiple dialects within the Hmong culture. Each dialect is spoken by the Hmong in different regions and parts of the world. Today, the most predominate dialects for Hmong are the White Hmong and Green Hmong dialects (Vang, 2003). Each of these dialect does not refer to the skin color but to linguistic difference within the Hmong community particularly in Laos and the United States.

Educational achievement and Experience of Hmong Americans students.

Hmong American students do not come from mainstream American culture. As a result, they face additional challenges in their pursuit of a post-secondary degree. This research stream will introduce the challenges faced by Hmong American students and discuss their educational achievement since 1990.

The Hmong’s educational achievement. After 40 years of settlement in the United States, Hmong Americans have made improvements in their educational attainment. According the U. S. Census (1990; 2015), the Hmong has been able to increase the percentage of high school graduates from 3.8% in 1990 to 669% in 2014.

The U.S. Census data also showed that the percentage of Hmong ages 25 and over holding a bachelor or higher degree has increased from 3.8% in 1990 to 11.6% in 2014.

Aside from their educational attainments, Hmong has also demonstrated improvements in academic performance, diminished high school drop-out rates, and increased college enrollment. Xiong (2012) examined the educational attainment of Hmong American students from 1990 to 2010. He used three data sources: (a) the U.S. Census Bureau's 1990 Census of the Population publication on "Asian and Pacific Islanders in the U.S.," (b) the Census 2000 100% summary file 4, and (c) the single-year and multiple-year American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples (PUMS). Through his analysis, Xiong (2012) revealed that (a) the proportion of Hmong who speak English "very well" has increased from 21.3% in 1990 to 49.1% in 2010, and (b) the percentage of Hmong women aged 18 and over who attended college or beyond was higher than that of Hmong men from 1990 to 2010. Xiong (2015) also noted that the percentage of high school dropouts from 1990 to 2010 remained relatively constant.

McNall, Dunnigan, and Mortimer (1994) conducted a longitudinal study on 105 Hmong students enrolled in St. Paul public high school. In their study, they administered a survey to gather economic and educational data from Hmong and non-Hmong ninth-graders and their parents or guardians. Through their investigation, McNall et al. (1994) discovered that although Hmong students were living below federal poverty lines, they were performing better than White students. McNall et al. (1994) were able to show that Hmong students spent more time studying and had a significantly higher grade point average than non-Hmong students. However, the Hmong's cultural support for early teen

marriage and child rearing appears to continue to threaten and hinder Hmong student's pursuit towards a post-secondary education.

Iannarelli (2015) also conducted a quantitative study to understand the educational achievement of Hmong students. He centered his study on the educational attainment of career technical college. He gathered data on the grade point average, course retention, successful course completion, race/ethnicity, gender, and financial aid eligibility of Hmong and White students and conducted a descriptive analysis. Through his analysis, he noticed there are several disparities among Hmong and White students. Iannarelli (2015) stated that Hmong students have higher eligibility for financial aid, have a significantly lower cumulative GPA than White students, and have higher levels of parental support.

The results from Iannarelli (2015) and McNall et al. (1994) revealed that Hmong American students face additional challenges in their pursuit towards a post-secondary degree. These challenges included academic and cultural barriers.

Academic challenges. Nieto (2004) asserted that schools should be prepared to teach all students. She noted that schools are unable to perform this task because the faculty and staff lack an understanding and awareness of the different experiences, values, culture, and knowledge Hmong students bring with them. As a result, Hmong students struggle to succeed in school.

First-generation student. Vang (2003) asserted that Hmong students' low academic performance was due to their parents' inability to teach and support their English skills. According to Ranard (1988), 70% of Hmong refugees who came to the United States were illiterate. Yang (1993) noted that the first school located near the

Hmong population in Laos opened in 1939. Yang (2003) also indicated that the first Hmong student to graduate high school did so in 1942, the first Hmong college graduate received his degree in 1966, and the first Hmong doctoral graduate completed his graduate studies in 1972. Because the Hmong community had little exposure to educational resources or system, Hmong college student often experiences challenges as first generation college students.

Atherton (2014) asserted that literature pertaining to first-generation college student has indicated that first generation college student are not academically prepared for college. In his study, Atherton (2014) used the social capital theory as a framework to explore the difference in academic preparedness of first-generation and traditional students. He proposed two hypotheses: a) first-generation students are less academically prepared in terms of objective academic measures of preparedness than traditional students, and b) first-generation students are less academically prepared in terms of subjective self-rating of academic preparedness than traditional students. Using data from the 1999 to 2009 Cooperative Institutional Research Program Survey, Atherton (2014) compared SAT scores for math and verbal subjects and reported high school GPA of first-generation and traditional students. Through his analysis, Atherton (2014) concluded that first-generation student are less academically prepared than traditional students.

Gibbons, Rhinehart, and Hardin (2016) used the social cognitive career theory as a framework to learn how first-generation college student adapt and adjust to college life. In their study, they invited 25% of the university's freshman cohort who were first-generation college to participate via email. Of the 25%, the researchers included the first

15 participants who responded to the email. The 15 research participants were invited to participate in a focus group facilitated by the researchers. The responses made by the participants were recorded, transcribed and coded for themes. Through their research, the researcher found that first-generation college students' adjustment to college involves them learning about themselves and managing their academic expectations. They also noted that a first-generation college student's adjustment to college involved them overcoming barriers and relying on support systems. Some of the challenges they found include parents not willing to allow the student to gain more independence, parents not understanding of the transition to college, and lacking information about college. In terms of support systems, the researcher identified parental support and encouragement as the most common support for first-generation college students.

Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson and Covarrubias (2012) proposed that there is a cultural mismatch between first-generation college students and the culture of American colleges. In their study, the researcher performed three studies. The first study assesses the university cultural norms by surveying university administrators. The second confirmed the mismatch between university colleges and first-generation college students' interdependent motives for attending college. The third study was comprised of two experiments at private and public universities regarding the matching or mismatching of first-generation students' culture through performance consequences. Through these three studies, the researchers reveal that there is a mismatch between the American college culture and first-generation college students' culture.

English language. Vang (2005) noted that majority of Hmong students studying in the U.S. was described as struggling to learn the English language and are often placed

in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Vang (2005) also asserted that the classification of Hmong students as limited English proficient (LEP) students has become a common practice within the educational system. Hmong students are automatically considered as LEP students and placed in ESL courses, even if there are academic programs designed to integrate Hmong students into the mainstream of the school. As a result of this, Hmong students remain socially and academically segregated from mainstream students and perform poorly.

Lee, Lam, and Madyum (2015) asserted that Hmong students tend to live in segregated areas where there is a high proportion of socioeconomic disadvantaged Hmong families who demonstrate poor English skills. They conclude that Hmong student has a poor reading skill. To understand how a different-race exposure environment would contribute to the academic performance of Hmong student, particular reading skills, Lee et al (2015) conducted a survey to analyze the relationship between different-race exposure environment and academic performance. They gathered data on Hmong students' reading scores, their participation in free or reduced lunch program, gender, special education status, linguistic status, and racial-ethnic composition and used four assessments: (a) the Metropolitan Achievement Test administered by public middle schools in Saint Paul, (b) the district's individual-level demographic database, (c) the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data tool, and (d) the U.S. Census data. The data obtained was used to construct a two-level hierarchical linear model. The first level included individual-level factors and the second-level included school or neighborhood level factors. After the construction of the model, the researchers employed a hierarchical regression analysis to examine the effects of demographic and

different-race spouses on Hmong student achievements. Through their research, they found that there is a positive connection between school different-race exposure and limited English proficient Hmong students' reading achievement. They found that school different-race exposure did produce more desirable social interactions. Their findings indicated that by integrating Hmong students into the educational systems, Hmong students can improve their academic performances.

Learning style difference. In addition to lacking the necessary academic background and English skills, Hmong students have been found to have a different learning style than Whites. Park's (2002) study noticed that Hmong students have a major preference for group learning styles that promote the use of visual learning, kinesthetic learning, and tactile learning approaches. Park (2002) conducted a comparative study to understand the learning style of Armenian, Hmong, Korean, Mexican, and Vietnamese students. In his study, he surveyed 857 high school students attending public high schools in southern and central California. He found that Hmong students preferred to learn in a group setting and liked the use of visual cues. Due to their learning preference, teachers often found it challenging to teach Hmong students.

Vang (2003) offered some suggestions for teachers. His suggestions included (a) encouraging Hmong students to ask questions in class or in one-on-one sessions, (b) waiting a few more minutes after asking a question to allow Hmong students to respond, (c) encourage or plan group activities for Hmong students to interact with non-Hmong students, (d) explain that mistakes and failure is part of the learning process and (e) offer additional educational and academic support to Hmong students. Vang (2003) noted that

if teachers are able to integrating these suggestions, they would be able to help Hmong students overcome language barriers; enabling Hmong students to succeed.

Cultural and Familial Challenges. Aside from their challenges in learning the English language, Hmong American students also experience cultural and familial challenges. Hmong American students come from two cultures, Hmong and American, therefore, they are required to confront the conflict of balancing their home culture with mainstream American culture.

Balancing cultural expectation and academic workload. Xiong and Lam (2013) described Hmong college students' challenges in balancing their academic work with cultural obligations and gender expectations. Xiong and Lam (2013) conducted a qualitative grounded theory research study to understand the educational experiences of Hmong undergraduate and graduate students. Using the criteria of the students being of Hmong descent and enrolled in a graduate program, the researchers were able to identify and recruit five research participants. Three participants were male and two were female. Through their investigation, they found that their research participants were expected to participate in cultural practices and ceremonies on the weekends. This expectation cut their studying time short and influence their educational performance. They also noted that the Hmong girls' responsibility of cooking and cleaning, and taking care of their elders prevented Hmong girls from focusing their attention on education and was found to be an added pressure.

Yang and Morris (2001) discussed Hmong students' challenges in balancing their cultural expectations with their academic workload. Their research was centered on the educational experience of two Hmong American women in nursing school. From their

investigation, the researchers described that their research participants were expected to attend shaman rituals on the weekends, which made it hard for them to complete their academic work. By acquiring their spouses' or parents' support, they were able to bypass this responsibility.

Parental support. Parental support is a factor that has been shown to have a huge contribution to the educational success of Hmong American students (Lee & Green, 2008; Lor, 2008; McNall et al, 1994). Lor (2008) described parent support as a contributing factor to the educational success of Hmong American college students. He indicated that Hmong parents supported their children's education by providing child care, encouraging their child, offering financial assistance, and performing spiritual and emotional healing rituals.

In Supple et al.'s (2010) study on parental influence on Hmong student success, they centered their study on parent expectation, support, and intergenerational difference. The researchers found that parents have higher expectations of their sons because Hmong sons are expected to carry on the family name. They also stated that due to this expectation, Hmong parents tend to support and allow their sons to adapt and assimilate to American culture. Supple et al. (2010) further noted that although Hmong daughters experienced limited personal freedom and more oppression, they receive more parental support and encouragement than Hmong boys.

Lee and Green (2008) also conducted a study on Hmong parents' involvement with their child's education. They compared and contrasted the characteristics of Hmong families, Hmong parent's parenting methods, and education expectations of high performing high school seniors with low performing high school seniors. Lee and Green

(2008) based their classification of two groups: (a) high performing and (b) low performing Hmong high school seniors based on high school cumulative GPA. For their classifications they randomly selected ten students and their parents (five from each group) to participate. Through their investigation, they established that parents of higher performing students were younger, had higher levels of training, and had better relationships and faith with the students. They also noted that parents from both groups were involved in their children's education during the elementary and middle school years and did not have any career or college preference for their children after high school.

Generational conflicts. Although parental support is high, Hmong American students have indicated that they have conflicts with their parents. Supple et al. (2010) asserted that Hmong parents often displayed low levels of love and compassion, high levels of control and one-way communications. Hmong parents were less likely to solicit and understand their child's perceptions, desires, and beliefs. He concluded that this misalignment has created conflicts among Hmong parents and child.

Xiong, Tuicomepee, and Rettig (2008) investigated whether Hmong adolescent behaviors and difficulties in school influenced parent-adolescent conflicts. They sampled 209 Hmong adolescents ages 12 to 15 living in Minnesota. The topics covered in the survey included parent-adolescent disagreements frequency and intensity, delinquent peer affiliation, gang involvement, truancy, and school performance. The data collected were analyzed using a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that parent-adolescent conflict was significantly influenced by the adolescents' behaviors and difficulties in school. Xiong et al. (2008) discussed that this linkage between the two

variables could be due to the Hmong parents' concern about their child's education, behaviors, and desire to have an obedient child. Hmong children who do not display these qualities generally reported to have high levels of conflict with their parents.

Lee (2001) also explored the parent and child conflicts in her ethnographic study of Hmong American girls attending University Height High School. Centering her study on gender, sexuality, and inter-generational conflict, Lee (2001) was found that there is a tension between the Hmong and American culture. She suggested there is not a distinctive Hmong way or the American way of perceiving and conducting behavior. She described that Hmong parents were constantly assessing political, social, economic conditions, and transforming themselves and their culture to align with these changes. She also noted that Hmong teens were also permitted to negotiate and balance the two cultures. Based on her findings, Lee (2001) concluded that the challenge of balancing both culture and parental conflict relies greatly on the Hmong teenage girl's perception and behaviors.

To provide guidance in dealing with parental conflicts, Su, Lee and Vang (2005) examined Hmong American college students' approach to using problem solving and social support mechanisms. Su et al. (2005) asserted that these two mechanisms showed moderate effects on family conflict and psychological adjustment and suggested they were appropriate strategies to deal with parental conflicts. The researchers sampled 86 Hmong American students using six different measuring tools: (a) Asian American Family Conflicts Scale, (b) Family Satisfaction Scale, (c) Coping Strategies Inventory, (d) Attributions of Blame Supplemental Scales, (e) Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule and (g) Hopkins Symptom Checklist-21. The results from their study revealed

that both approaches negatively effect of family conflict; indicating that problem solving and social support mechanisms are effective in overcoming parental conflict.

Institutional Challenges. Aside from the challenge they face within their culture, Hmong American students also have been found to experience challenges with their schools. Vang (2003) asserted that teachers at the K-12 level are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to address the challenge faced by Hmong American students. To assist teachers, he outlined the differences between the Hmong and American culture and made recommendations for teachers. Vang (2003) suggested that teachers treat Hmong students more as individuals who have a distinctive learning style, rather than individuals from a different home setting and socioeconomic status.

Inadequate support programs. Another challenge Hmong American students faced in school was described as not having adequate support programs. In their study, Xiong and Lee (2011) noted that academic support programs (ASP) in higher educational institutions have been unable to meet the needs of Hmong American students. Xiong and Lee (2011) surveyed 55 Hmong college students at a large, public western university about their participation in academic support programs. They found that 28 Hmong students participated in one or more ASPs. The 28 that participated revealed that the ASPs offered support. The support that Hmong American student sought were centered on financial concerns and career planning and not academic success. Xiong and Lee (2011) concluded that the ASPs offered to Hmong American students did not address their academic challenges of lacking time to study, poor study habits, lack of money, lack of motivation, lack of direction on career goals, and poor time management to be

obstacles for them in higher education. They concluded that the ASPs were not able to meet the needs of Hmong American students.

Inadequate administrator support. Hmong American students do not have adequate teacher, para-educator, and school administrator representation, particularly at the higher education level. Yang (2001) studied approximately 120 Hmong who obtained their doctoral degrees in law, pharmacy, and other professions. In this population there were only eight Hmong tenured and tenure-track university teachers. He indicated that of the eight, four were tenured associate professors, five were in California, two in Wisconsin, and one in Minnesota.

Critical Race Theory

Due to their race and ethnicity, Hmong American students' needs may have been overlooked by higher educational institutions. This research stream introduces Critical Race Theory, the theoretical lens grounding this study.

Origins and applications. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, a plethora of legal scholarship and theories emerged with regard to race and racism (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Critical Race Theory (CRT) was one of the theories. Emerging from the critical legal studies discipline, CRT was intended to address some of the shortcomings of the critical legal study (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). It has developed into a theoretical framework to challenge racial injustice in American society. It focuses on offering insight into how "White supremacy" and oppression of people of color has been established and perpetuated in American society through seven key tenets (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 5):

1. *Permanence of Racism.* The permanence of racism is the open acknowledgement that racism is not a random act, but an ingrained element of the American society. Additionally, it is an “endemic and permanent aspect of People of Color’s experiences” (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 6).
2. *Experiential Knowledge/Counter-storytelling.* Lynn and Adams (2002) described that experiential knowledge is essential to theorize race within the context of the people of color’s daily experiences with racism. Experiential knowledge is traditionally gathered through the use of counterstories. Counterstories serve as a “tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). It is primarily used to “provide voice to marginalized people” and “cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths” (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 8). Counterstories can be collected through personal narratives, other people’s narratives, and composite narratives (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, pp. 8-9).
3. *Interest Convergence Theory.* The interest convergence theory is the theory that people of color’s interest with racial equities only advances when those interests converge with the interests of the people in power, which are generally White males. The interest convergence theory was introduced by Derrick A. Bell (1980) in his analysis of “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma.” In this analysis, Bell (1980) described that the court decision to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson* gave the United States credit for being a world leader in the fight against communism’s spread. He also discussed how the Brown

decision was a mean to reassure Blacks that equality and freedom were valued and promote the South to become a more industrialized society.

4. *Intersectionality*. Intersectionality is the realization that racism intersects with other forms of identities such as gender, class, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.
5. *Whiteness as Property*. Whiteness as property is grounded in the premise that there are certain “assumptions, privileges, and benefits” associated with being White. It was first introduced by Cheryl Harris (1993) in her discussion of her grandmother passing for White in the Deep South and the Midwest.
6. *Critique of liberalism*. CRT scholars challenged the concepts of objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, equal opportunity, and incremental change by indicating that these beliefs ignore the permanence of racism (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).
7. *Commitment to social injustice*. Critical race scholars are committed to the establishment of social justice within the American society, particularly the educational system. Social justice is defined as “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (Bell, 2013, p. 21). It also includes a “vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (Bell, 2013, p. 31). CRT is committed to “resist the racialized and gendered inequality and injustice marking access to social, political, economic, and cultural resources” and facilitates change toward social justice for people of color (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 14).

As a theoretical framework, CRT serves as a tool for exploring and understanding race and racism within several systems and industries, including education. In education, it can serve as an analytical tool for examining the educational issues by “challenging Eurocentric epistemology and questioning dominant notions of meritocracy, objectivity, and knowledge” (Taylor, 2009, p. 10). Additionally, it can serve as a “theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). “CRT serves as the liberatory potential of schooling” (p. 74). CRT serves as a liberatory pedagogy by encouraging inquiry and dialogue on racism (Taylor, 2009).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were the first persons to introduce CRT to education in their work “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education.” In their article, Ladson-Billing and Tate discussed that there are statistical and demographic data supporting the notion that race is still a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States. Race can be a means for discussing social and economic decay in a far more threatening approach to politics. Unlike gender and class, race, is under theorized. They also mention that gender and class explanations for the inequality in the United States, particularly the education system, is not sufficient. The two scholars suggested that race can serve as a framework to explore the inequalities in education as it “uncover[s] or decipher[s] social-structural and cultural significance of race in education” (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995, p. 50). Their suggestion led them to the introduction of the CRT as a theoretical framework to explore educational inequities.

Since Ladson-Billing and Tate’s (1995) suggestion to explore the experiences of students of color through the lens of race and racism, a vast amount of research has been

conducted to understand the educational experiences of Asian American students.

Using the CRT framework, Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, and Parker (2009) examined the educational experience of Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). Through their research, Teranishi et al. found that the data representing AAPI student access and admission to college/university was misrepresented because the data focused on AAPI entry into four-year colleges/universities. They also noted that the admission data pertaining to AAPI students are aggregated and do not reflect the diverse ethnic groups' educational achievement and needs. They found gaps within the student development theories and practices as well. Teranishi et al. concluded that the current student development theories and practices were insufficient to support the educational experiences of AAPI college students because they do not address the implications race and racial campus climates have on AAPI students. Additionally, the research pertaining to the psychological well-being of AAPI college students does not explore why and how AAPI students display a lower level of psychological well-being.

Park and Liu (2014) also employed CRT as a theoretical framework to discuss the educational experiences of Asian Americans. They noted that academically successful White students have challenged the fairness of the affirmative action policy in court. Their argument relies heavily on using Asian Americans as "poster children" (Park & Liu, 2014, p. 36). Hence, Park and Liu used one tenet of CRT, interest convergence, to examine and discuss the relationship between the affirmative action policy and Asian Americans. The researchers used two critical elements of affirmative action, meritocracy, and critical mass to illustrate the relationship between affirmative action and Asian Americans. Through their investigation, Park and Liu found that talent, test scores,

grades, and leadership experiences cause admission officers to hold Asian Americans to a higher standard than other minority groups and Whites, resulting in negative action. Negative action was noted to be “when White students are more likely to gain admission than Asian Americans with equivalent standardized academic records” (Park & Liu, 2014, p. 39). Park and Liu’s (2014) investigation revealed that both Asian Americans and the institution benefit from the effects of affirmative action. Asian Americans benefit by gaining admission to prestigious universities and institutions benefit by having a more diverse student population. The researchers founded that the institution is unable to support the development of Asian American students. Based on their findings, the researchers concluded that “interest converges when Whites embrace Asian Americans as victims of affirmative action” and it diverges when negative action occurs and developmental support is needed (Park & Liu, p. 46).

Using CRT as a theoretical framework Buenavista, Jayakumar, and Misa-Escalante (2009) were able to demonstrate that sociohistorical context influences the educational experiences of Asian Americans. In their article, Buenavista et al. discussed how Asian Americans are often portrayed as model minorities. To prove their argument, the researchers alluded to the educational experience of Filipino college students. In their discussion, they stated that Filipino college students are liminal students who experience many of the challenges faced by underrepresented students. These challenges include meeting family expectation and obligations, feeling a sense of belonging, and paying for college tuition. In addition, Buenavista et al. (2009) found that Filipino college students have lower retention rates and lower levels of educational well-being.

AsianCrit. Due to the vast amount of research emerging on Asian American Asians' educational experiences through the lens of Critical Race Theory Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit) has now emerged as a theoretical framework. AsianCrit is a theoretical lens that has enabled researchers to understand Asian Americans' experiences through the lens of race. Like CRT, AsianCrit presumes that race is central and embedded within the American society and intersects with other forms of oppression, challenges the dominate notion of "meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity" (Chae, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 472). It is also committed to social justice, and recognizes that experiential knowledge is appropriate to understanding and challenging oppression. It expands beyond these tenets to include Asianization, transnational contexts, (re)constructive history, and strategic (anti)essentialism (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Asianization is defined as "the reality that racism and nativistic racism are pervasive aspects of American [U.S.] society, and that society racializes Asian Americans in distinct ways" (Museus, 2013, p. 23). In addition to these tenets, AsianCrit has revealed that "Asian American occupy an ambiguous racial positions in the constructions of the racial identity spectrum" (Li-Bugg, 2011, p. 127). This position is located between Blacks and Whites and requires special detail.

Model minority stereotype. The model minority stereotype emerged in the 1960s when racial equity between Blacks and Whites plagued the country (Hang, 2015; Her, 2014). It was originally intended to praise Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans for their academic and financial success (Hang, 2015; Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Vue, 2007). Today, the stereotype serves as an obstacle hindering the academic success of several Asian American, particularly Southeast Asian Americans.

Her (2014) discussed that Southeast Asian Americans are immigrant refugees who have fled their home countries to escape the trauma of war. As a result, they are faced with the challenge of assimilating into the American culture and unable to uphold the model minority stereotype. Her (2014) indicated that Southeast Asian Americans are not model minorities because of their limited English language, poor socioeconomic status, and low educational attainment. She alluded to the high proportions of Southeast Asian Americans who speak very little English, the poverty rate of 20-28%, and the low educational attainment of 12% or less.

Yang's (2004) research also discussed the implication of the model minority stereotype on Southeast Asian Americans. Yang (2004) described that Southeast Asian American students face educational challenges because their parents lack English skills and knowledge of the formal educational system. She stated that a huge proportion of Southeast Asian American parents are immigrant refugees with limited English language skills and are unable to communicate with teachers and support their child's academic performance. Hence, Southeast Asian American students struggle to achieve academic proficiency.

Ngo and Lee (2007) conducted a review of the existing literature pertaining to the educational achievement and experiences of Southeast Asian Americans, particularly Vietnamese Americans, Hmong Americans, Cambodian Americans, and Laotian Americans. Through their research, Ngo and Lee (2007) concluded that Vietnamese American students are achieving academic success at a higher rate than their Southeast Asian peers. The reason for this is the Vietnamese culture places a huge emphasis on

education, strong work ethics, and achievement. The Vietnamese culture's values are compatible with those of the American society.

Ngo and Lee (2007) also examined the implications of the model minority stereotype on Hmong American students. They found that Hmong American students come from a culture that is very distinct from the mainstream culture. As a result, Hmong American students have limited experiences with formal education and limited English language skills. They were able to perform better than Cambodian American and Laotian American students in school. The reason is Hmong American students spend more time on their homework, have greater educational aspirations, have higher grade point averages, and receive greater cultural and parent support. There are a significant number of Hmong American students involved in gang activity. As a result of this, Hmong American students are often portrayed as model minorities or as delinquents. An investigation into the educational experiences of Hmong American student has revealed that Hmong student are not model minorities or delinquents.

In her ethnographic study, Lee (2001) attempted to show that Hmong American student does not adhere to the model minority or delinquent image. In her study, she observed 1.5 generations Hmong American students' educational experiences. She explored the influenced of economic forces, the dominant society, family relationships, culture, and Hmong American students' attitudes toward school. Through her research, she discovered the Hmong American student experiences a variety of challenges that are not associated with the model minority or delinquent stereotype. These challenges included intergenerational conflicts, poor academic skills, and low socioeconomic status.

Using the theoretical framework of Academic Capital Formation (ACF), Ting, Collins, Fisher and Chiang (2015) analyzed the implications of the Model Minority Myth. They concentrated their study on the educational experiences and challenges of Hmong American high school scholars in the Midwest. Ting et al. (2015) conducted interviews and focus groups on seven Hmong American high school students. Through their investigation, they discovered four emerging categories: (a) the impact of their self-perceived marginal status within the community, (b) Hmong cultural influences, (c) the K-12 educational experiences, and (d) a dearth of “college knowledge” resources. They affirmed that there is a bimodal pattern of achievement amongst the Hmong community, and that underrepresented Hmong students.

Ethnic Identity

As Hmong American women negotiate their way through higher education, they also face the challenge of negotiating their identity as Hmong women. Chickering (1969) asserted that students are confronted with the developmental task of defining who they are in college, and students who identify within one or more ethnic groups face a greater complexity than those who only identify with one ethnic group. As a result, many researchers have sought to understand the influence ethnic identity has on the educational experiences of student of color.

Maramba and Velasquez (2012) conducted a qualitative study to examine the ethnic identity development among underrepresented students of color at a predominantly White university. The purpose of their study was to understand how students of colors’ campus experiences influenced their ethnic identity development. Using an in-depth interview method, Maramaba and Velasquez asked students to reflect on how the

development of their ethnic identity intersected with outcomes such as critical thinking, communication skills, and a sense of competence. Through their investigation, they discovered that when students furthered their understanding of their own ethnic group, they obtained both cognitive and non-cognitive benefits. They also found that the ethnic identity of students had a positive impact on the students' sense of competence, a sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and commitment.

Schmidt et al. (2014) examined how relational health and ethnic identity contribute to the overall well-being of students of color in college. They surveyed a total of 229 students and conducted a canonical correlation analysis. The variables used in the study were relational health, ethnic identity, indicators of subjective well-being (SWB), and perceptions of physical health. Through their investigation, Schmidt et al. revealed two patterns of relationships. The first one was that students who reported lower scores in the categories of ethnic identity, peer, mentor, and community relationships demonstrated lower subjective well-being. The second relationship was that students who had a low ethnic identity, but a high score in peer and mentor relationships reported to have higher positive and negative affect and good and poor health.

Pizzolato et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between ethnic identity, epistemological development, and achievement among students of color in two studies. The first study explored the relationship between ethnic identity and epistemological development in high-achieving students of color using semi-structured interviews. The second one examined how the relationship between ethnic identity development, epistemological development, and achievement works using a survey. Pizzolato et al. recruited 307 students of color from student organizations at two large public universities

in the eastern United States. Through their investigation, they found that the three variables were related. Ethnic identity and epistemological development explained the variance in college GPA and SAT scores and high school GPA.

Duffy and Klingaman (2009) surveyed a sample of 2,432 first-year college students to explore the relationship between ethnic identity achievement and career development progress. Through their correlation analyses, they revealed that Black and Asian American students who had higher levels of ethnic identity achievement had significantly higher levels of career decidedness and White and Latina/o students showed no significant relationship between the two variables. Duffy and Klingaman's findings suggested that ethnic identity achievement may play a meaningful, but limited role in first-year students of colors' career decisions.

Among the research on ethnic identity and students of colors' educational experiences, there is a limited number of research conducted on Hmong American youth and women. Nguyen (2013) interviewed 25 Hmong adolescents aged 12-18 to understand how Hmong adolescents described their ethnic pride and how their understanding of their ethnicity is informed by perceptions of collective and social identities. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews revealed that ethnic identity plays a complex role in the lives of Hmong adolescents. She also found that Hmong adolescent ethnic pride was defined as both an individual characteristic and a social construct because their perception of their ethnic pride was informed by their Hmong peer groups and themselves.

In her study, Lee (2002) explored how Hmong American students at University Heights High School interpret what it means to be Hmong in the United States. The

research participants for her study were both first- and second-generation Hmong American youth. Lee (2002) focused on examining how the American culture at the school shapes Hmong American students' experiences and their understandings of being American. Through her investigation, she revealed that her research participants felt isolated as a result of their culture, race, and status as immigrants. Based on her findings, Lee (2002) suggested that school administrators and instructors should attempt to integrate Hmong students into the American culture and be cognizant of the Hmong culture.

Lee (2008) also examined Hmong's ethnic identity, but he centered on study on exploring the self-rated social well-being of Hmong college students in Northern California. His study included 50 Hmong college students between the ages of 18 to 30. These participants indicated that they were 1.5 generation Hmong students who either left Southeast Asia as children or were born in the United States. Through his study, Lee (2002) noted that (a) 78% rated their living standard to be average and extremely well, (b) 80% rated their health from good to excellent, (c) 44% strongly agreed that their parents' experience as refugees influenced them to strive harder for future self-sufficiency, and (d) 54% value the Hmong culture very highly and 78% described the Hmong culture as being important to them. Lee (2002) result showed that Hmong students' social well-being stems from their culture and history.

The research studies conducted around students of colors' understanding the influence ethnic identity has on student performance and social well-being indicate that students with a higher level of ethnic pride and knowledge display higher levels of academic performance and success. As a result, researchers have made several

suggestions for higher education institutions to plan and implement diverse educational activities such as teach communities, research opportunities, and student clubs or organization for students (Kuh et al., 2008; Ngo, 2015).

Summary

Hmong American women are a unique group of individuals with a distinct culture and history that has been shown to support and hinder Hmong American women from pursuing a post-secondary degree. They are also members of the ethnic group Asian American and are often mistaken as model minorities who do not need the assistance and support of education special programs to obtain educational success. A deeper investigation and review of the literature pertaining to Hmong American women, Hmong American students, Southeast Asian Americans, and Asian Americans has indicated that Hmong American women experiences multiple challenges. Researchers like Kuh et al. (2008) and Ngo (2015) suggest that higher educational institutions should be proactive in planning and implementing several educational activities such as learning communities, research opportunities, student clubs, or organizations to support the academic and educational success of students of color, including Hmong American women.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

Research into the low educational attainment of Hmong American women has indicated that Hmong American women face additional challenges hindering their academic progression (Lee, 1997, 2001; Ngo, 2002; Riggs & Moua, 2015; Vue, 2007; Yang & Morris, 2001). These challenges include early teen marriage, gender roles, and cultural differences and expectations. This study explored, through narrative inquiry, the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college or university, focusing on understanding how their gender and cultural roles influence their educational experiences. This study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their educational experiences in higher education?
2. What do the stories told by Hmong American women indicate about the challenges they face with their family and culture?
3. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their identity as Hmong women?

This chapter describes the research design and introduces the target sites and population. Ethical considerations and approaches to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants are discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

Social constructivists believe reality is socially constructed through creative and interpretative minds of individuals in their physical and temporal world (Paul, 2005).

Narrative research is the most appropriate research method for exploring the experiences of Hmong American women in higher education because it is a qualitative research design for capturing the lived and told stories of research participants. It is also an approach used by researchers to provide insight into the experiences of people of color. Additionally, narratives are sense-making tools that enable the researcher, in collaboration with the participants, to construct reality by perceiving, structuring, and organizing their experiences, enabling them to construct an identity (Riessman, 2008). As a result, qualitative narrative research is the most appropriate method to capture first-hand accounts of Hmong American women's experiences in higher education and to understand their ethnic identity.

Site and Population

Site Description

This research was not confined to a specific site, but drew from the Sacramento region, home to one of the largest Hmong populations in California. As of 2010, there were 26,996 Hmong residing in the Sacramento-Yolo region (Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, & Yang, 2012). In addition to having a relatively large Hmong population, the Sacramento region has several private and public colleges/universities attended by Hmong American women. This location allowed the researcher to recruit and select her research participants through a criteria-sampling approach.

Population

As mentioned, the research participants selected for this study were selected through criteria sampling. The criteria used to identify and select the research participants were (a) being a Hmong American woman and (b) having obtained a post-

secondary degree. The target population comprised five Hmong American women in the Sacramento region. These individuals were both first-generation and second-generation Hmong American women between the ages of 21 and 30.

Site Access and Barriers

There were no issues regarding site access and barrier. The researcher recruited research participants through her personal and professional connections in the Hmong community. Research participants were invited to participate through criteria sampling.

Research Methods

With the capability of providing voice and detailed first-person accounts of the lived and told experiences of research participants, the narrative research method is deemed the most appropriate approach for exploring the experiences of Hmong American women in higher education. “A narrative research approach is comprised of seven common characteristics: (a) individual experience, (b) chronology of experience, (c) collecting individual stories, (d) restorying, (e) coding for themes, (f) context and setting, and (g) collaborating with participants” (Creswell, 2012, p. 507). This research study exhibits the seven characteristics of narrative research through the use of semi-structured interviews, researcher’s journal entries, artifacts, and participant journal entries. This research also includes a thematic narrative research analysis to identify common themes surrounding the experiences of Hmong American women in higher education.

Description of Methods Used

Semi-structured interview. The goal of a narrative interview is to “generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). The general interviewing approach is replaced with “two active participants who

jointly construct narrative and meaning” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). The researcher participated in co-creating and re-telling the lived and told stories provided by the research participants.

Instrument description. In the first interview session, the interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to gather information on the educational experiences of the research participants. The interview protocol included 20 simple, straightforward, and open-ended questions to provide detailed accounts of each research participant’s educational experiences. These 20 questions also include probing questions. In the second interview session, the researcher and participant discussed the participant’s responses to the reflection questions in their journal entry (see Appendix B).

Participant selection. The research participants were selected using criteria sampling methods. Creswell (2012) defined a criteria-sampling method as one whereby the “researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). Research participants were selected based on the following criteria: A Hmong American woman with a bachelor’s degree on a first-come, first-included basis.

Identification and invitation. Initially, participants were recruited from the researcher’s professional and community networks through a criteria-sampling approach. All participants received a letter of invitation and consent to volunteer in the study (see Appendix C). The interview was focused on gathering information regarding the educational experiences of the research participants.

An individual who received the e-mail and replied promptly was contacted by the researcher via telephone. The conversation included a verbal introduction to the research

study confirming that the research participants met the research criteria and garnering a verbal consent from the prospective participants. After receiving the verbal consent, the researcher provided the research participant with a consent form (see Appendix D). The consent form explained the process of confidentiality, privacy protection, and acknowledgement of the research participant's rights to withdraw from the study at any point or time.

Data collection. The data collection process was conducted over eight weeks. Each participant participated in two interviews, which were conducted in person and recorded. The first semi-structured interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and was recorded using two recording devices. Probing questions were used when appropriate. After completing the first interview with each participant, recordings were transcribed verbatim and the researcher "restored" the data, returning for the second interview using the restored representation as the basis for deepening dialogue and clarification of the written story, if necessary. This process was done one time further to ensure thick, rich, and accurate descriptions.

A second interview occurred two weeks after the first interview. The researcher returned for the second interview using the restored representation as the basis for deepening dialogue and clarification of the written story. It was an open discussion between the researcher and research participants regarding the transcription of the first interview and the participants' journals. This session was also recorded with prior approval.

Each interview recording was transcribed by the researcher herself. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms on all electronic and printed copies. The

recording was kept confidential on a USB device that was password protected with no Internet connection and stored in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher.

Participant reflection journal. After the first interview, the researcher provided each research participant with a journal to reflection on their educational experiences. After two weeks, the researcher met with each participant to discuss the content of the journal, and the discussion was recorded with prior permission.

Instrument description. The journal contained five open-ended questions requesting the participants to reflect on their educational experiences (see Appendix B). The research participants had two weeks to answer the questions.

Participant selection. All the research participants who agreed to participate in this research study received a journal with five open-ended questions and were asked to answer them in a reflective writing process.

Identification and invitation. Prior to the interviews, the researcher informed the participants that she would provide them with a journal. Additionally, the researcher indicated this on her informed consent form.

Data collection. The five questions within the journal collected information regarding the research participants' experiences in high school and college. The journal was administered at the end of the first interview and collected at the end of the second interview. Once collected, the journals were stored in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality of the research participants. The journals were analyzed and used to triangulate the findings of the study.

Researcher's journal entries. During both interview sessions, the researcher observed the participants for any non-verbal cues, emotional responses, and voice

inflections. These observations were recorded in the researcher's journal and served as another data collection method for triangulation. The journal also contained notes of the various artifacts shared by the research participants.

Instrument description. The researcher used a journal to document non-verbal cues, emotional responses, and voice inflections during each interview session. Additionally, the journal contained notes from each interview.

Participant selection. All the research participants who agreed to participate in this research study were observed during the interviews.

Identification and invitation. Prior to the interviews, the researcher informed the research participant that she would observe them for non-verbal cues, emotional responses, and voice inflections during the interview. The researcher indicated her intent to observe in the informed consent form.

Data collection. During each interview, the researcher observed the research participants for non-verbal cues, emotional responses, and voice inflections. She noted her observations in her research journal. The researcher's journal was used as another data collection tool to triangulate the findings of the research.

Artifact notes. Artifacts can include documents, letters, memory boxes, and photography (Creswell, 2012). Some participants offered photographs and or documents as artifacts. The artifacts were reviewed and written notes were made of the significance to the research inquiry; none of the items were taken by the researcher. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of participants, the researcher noted the significance of the photos and mementos shared by the research participants. The information from the artifacts supplement the lived and told stories of each participant.

Additionally, collecting artifacts enabled the researcher to holistically analyze the data and retell the stories of each research participant.

Instrument description. The researcher used her research journal to note the significance of each artifact shared by the research participants. The journal was stored in a locked cabinet and was only accessible to the researcher and primary researcher.

Participant selection. All the research participants who agreed to participate in this research study were encouraged to provide photographs, documents, and letters regarding their experiences as Hmong American women in a college/university. Each participant was informed of the researcher's intent to note the significance of each artifact shared by the research participant prior to the meeting. If a research participant opted not to provide this information, she was not excluded from the study. The researcher respected each research participant's decision to provide or not provide artifacts.

Identification and invitation. Prior to the interviews, the researcher informed the research participant that she would like to note the significance of each artifact. The researcher indicated her intent to note artifacts in her informed consent form.

Data collection. After each interview session, the researcher asked if the research participants had any photographs, letters, or documents they would like to share to supplement their stories and provide insight into their educational experiences. Some participants offered photographs and or documents as artifacts. The researcher used the research journal to note the significance of the artifacts. The artifacts were used as another data collection tool to triangulate the findings of the research.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected from the interviews, the researcher's journal, artifacts, and the research participant journal entries were subject to thematic narrative analysis. A thematic narrative analysis comprises the following procedures: (a) isolating and ordering the lived and told stories provided by the research participants, (b) identifying underlying assumptions, (c) coding each interview, and (d) comparing the emerging themes from each interview (Riessman, 2008). Thematic narrative analysis enables the researcher to keep the content of each story and theorize from each case rather than from categories (Riessman, 2008).

The data were also coded using process coding and in vivo coding. Process coding is used to assist in organizing the stories in chronological order and bring about several themes related to the Hmong American women's academic experiences (Saldana, 2012). In vivo coding offers insight and brings about additional themes. The themes from each data collection method were triangulated and are reported in Chapter 4. This process of analyzing, coding, and triangulation lasted from one to two months.

Stage of Data Collection

Table 1 offers a review of the planned timeline for this study.

Table 1

Study Timeline

Action	Date/Activity
Complete proposal	<i>July – December 2015</i> Draft, review, and update chapter 1, 2, and 3 with supervising professor's guidance
Committee review and approval	<i>December 2015</i>
IRB review and approval	<i>January 2016 – February 2016</i>
Interview research participants	<i>March 2016 – September 2016</i> Identify, invite, and interview research participants. Collect field text and observations.
Data structuring and Analysis	<i>October 2016 – November 2016</i> Restory individual experiences in chronological order and collaborate with research participants to code and analyze for emerging themes.
Chapters 4 and 5	<i>December 2016 – February 2017</i> Draft, review, and update Chapters 4 and 5 with supervising professor's guidance.
Celebration	<i>June 2017</i>

Ethical Considerations

There are many ethical considerations regarding research on human subjects, especially when participants share their experiences. To minimize risk, the researcher sought and obtained Drexel's Institutional Review Board approval, followed the interview protocol, and took extra measures to ensure that research participants were respected throughout the study. The researcher also provided a description of the study's intent and procedures, outlined the associated risks and benefits of the study, and obtained both verbal and written formal consent from each research participant. Additionally, research participants were allowed to exit and opt out of the research at any point of time.

To ensure the confidentiality of the research participants, the researcher used pseudonyms on all printed and electronic data and transcribed the interviews herself. To safeguard all data and research material, the researcher saved and stored all materials on a USB drive with no Internet connection. This USB drive was also stored in a locked cabinet and was only accessible to the researcher.

Summary

This chapter highlighted the research methods used to explore the experiences of Hmong American women pursuing a post-secondary degree. Narrative research was deemed the most appropriate because it can capture the lived or told stories of research participants experiencing the phenomenon (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2012; Riessman, 2008). The data collection methods used in this study were semi-structured interviews, field observations, and artifacts. The data obtained from the research methods were subject to thematic analysis and coded for emerging themes using both in vivo and process coding processes. To ensure the confidentiality of participants and protect the research participants' rights, an informed consent form was signed by them and pseudonyms were used.

Chapter 4: Findings, Results, and Interpretations

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the experiences of Hmong American women in colleges/universities to understand how their gender and cultural roles influence their educational experiences. Hmong American women are a unique group of individuals who experience additional challenges in their pursuit for a post-secondary education due to their unique cultural and gender roles. As Hmong women, they are expected to carry out both their cultural and gender responsibilities as a mother, daughter/daughter-in-law, and wife. These responsibilities include overseeing and managing household chores, attending cultural gatherings and rituals on the weekends, such as blessing ceremonies and funerals, and raising children and caring for their elders.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the five participants and is followed by the findings and results and interpretation.

Participant Overview

This study focused on the shared stories of five Hmong American women who recently graduated from a college or university in the greater Sacramento, California region. Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the participants, including information on their (a) pseudonyms, (b) university or college, (c) age, and (d) graduation year, followed by a brief description of each research participant's unique circumstance.

Table 2

Participant Overview

Pseudonym	University/College	Age	Graduation Year
Pa	University of California, Davis	31	2008
Chee	University of California, Davis	31	2007
Nou	California State University, Sacramento	28	2015
Yer	University of California, Davis	29	2010
Shoua	California State University, Sacramento	29	2011

Pa was a first-generation college student. She was also the first child in her family to attend college. In high school, Pa participated in an outreach program provided through the University of California, Davis known as UC Davis Upward Bound. As a participant of this outreach program, Pa was able to live on the campus of UC Davis for two summers before attending the university as a college student. The experience made it easier for her to adjust to her lifestyle as a college student. The program also provided her the opportunity to acquire study skills and support in the application process for college. Thus, Pa was able to attend the University of California, Davis in the fall of 2003. In her first year in college, she lived in the dorms with four friends from high school and took courses to fulfill her general education and writing requirements. During her second year in college, Pa moved to an off-campus apartment with two of her friends. Pa shared that she lived in the same apartment until she graduated in the summer of 2008 as a Human Development and Japanese major. After graduating, Pa was offered a

teaching position in Korea, which she took, and lived in Korea for a year. After returning from Korea, Pa was offered a data analyst position with PICO California. After two years with PICO California, she was promoted to financial assistant.

Chee was also a first-generation college student. She was the second child and first daughter in her family to attend college. Chee was originally from Fresno, CA. In the fall of 2003, she relocated to Davis, CA to attend UC Davis as a math major. During her first year in college, Chee lived on campus. She also participated in the Hmong Student Union (HSU), a Hmong club, and took courses to satisfy her general education requirements and major. After attending UC Davis for a year, Chee realized that the courses offered by UC Davis were too difficult for her. She decided to take classes offered by the Davis Center, a center run by Sacramento City College in Davis, CA, for a year. She returned to UC Davis in the fall of 2005 and changed her major to human development. In the spring of 2007, Chee graduated from UC Davis, started work as a part-time para-educator, and attended the Brandman College for her master's degree in education. Chee's intentions were to become a teacher. In 2010, Chee graduated with her master's degree in education and started her full-time employment as a teacher in the Twin Rivers School District. She started her career as a high school teacher and left a year later to provide tutoring and support services to children with learning disabilities in elementary schools.

Nou was a first-generation college student. She was also the first child in her family to attend college. As a high school student, Nou attended Sacramento High School where she took a variety of science courses, including human anatomy. Her goal was to become a science major and pursue a career in the science field. With the

influence of *Criminal Science Investigation*, a television show, Nou applied to UC Davis as a biological science major. In the fall of 2006, Nou was accepted to UC Davis. Unlike Pa and Chee, Nou did not live in the dorms her first year. Nou commuted to UC Davis with two of her cousins, who were also attending . In her first year, Nou took a variety of science courses along with courses that met her general education and writing requirements. After one year, Nou realized that she did not possess the study skills to pursue a degree in the science field. As a result, she started to let go of her dream of becoming a criminal forensic scientist. Nou left UC Davis in the summer of 2007 and worked as a teacher's assistant. During her employment, Nou started to develop a passion for teaching and decided to enroll in classes at Sacramento City College (SCC). During her attendance at SCC, Nou took a variety of courses, which satisfied her general education requirements and her major, liberal studies. In the spring of 2012, Nou transferred to California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) and graduated in the fall of 2014. As of today, Nou is a receptionist in an optometry office in Elk Grove, CA.

Yer was the fifth child in her family attending college; three of her older brothers attended either a community college or technical schools and one attended UC Davis. Yer was the first daughter in her family to attend college because her older sister married at an early age. Yer attended UC Davis as an art studio student. Like Pa, Yer participated in the UC Davis Upward Bound program in high school and had the opportunity to live in the dorms at UC Davis prior to her attendance at UC Davis. In her first year, Yer lived in the dorms and took courses to satisfy her art major requirements and general education. She also participated in the activities and events hosted by HSU. In her second year, Yer decided to take up one of the leadership roles for the club. The

role she took focused primarily on providing support to freshmen in college and outreaching to Hmong high school students in the Sacramento, CA region. In her third year, Yer's father passed away, which took a toll on her academic performance and well-being, causing her to finish her degree in 2010.

Shoua was also a first-generation college student. She was the third child in her family to attend college. Shoua attended CSUS in the fall of 2006. As a high school student, Shoua was unable to participate in a variety of outreach services offered by her high school because her parents were very strict on her. They always expected her to come home after school and assist with household chores. As a result, Shoua knew very little about the college opportunities available to her and only applied to CSUS. Shoua explained that she only knew about CSUS because both her older siblings attended the college. While attending college, Shoua lived at home and commuted because CSUS did not offer students who lived in Sacramento the opportunity to live in the dorms. In her first two years, Shoua struggled to decide on a major because she was unsure of what career path she wanted to pursue. After exploring a variety of classes, Shoua decided to declare her major, Biology, and graduated in 2011. After graduation, Shoua started to prepare and apply to medical school, but stopped because her father became ill, forcing her to find a job. Shoua was able to find a job as a teacher for Yem Peb Suab Elementary School, a Hmong charter school, because of her ability to read, write, and speak her native language.

Findings

The finding offered in this chapter emerged from triangulation and thematic analysis of four data sources described in Chapter 3: (a) semi-structure interviews, (b)

observations during interviews, (c) artifacts, and (d) research participant journal entries. In the first round of coding, the researcher constructed, in chronological order, the stories shared by each participant. In the second round, the researcher identified underlying assumptions and segmented the information that lead to coding categories for each participant (Creswell, 2012). In the third round, the researcher compared underlying assumption and code categories for all five participants to identify themes. Through the data analysis process, the following four themes emerged: (a) family and Hmong culture challenges, (b) educational and language challenges, (c) strategies to overcome challenges, and (d) the Hmong American woman identity. A summary of themes and subthemes is represented in a graphic organizer in Figure 4.

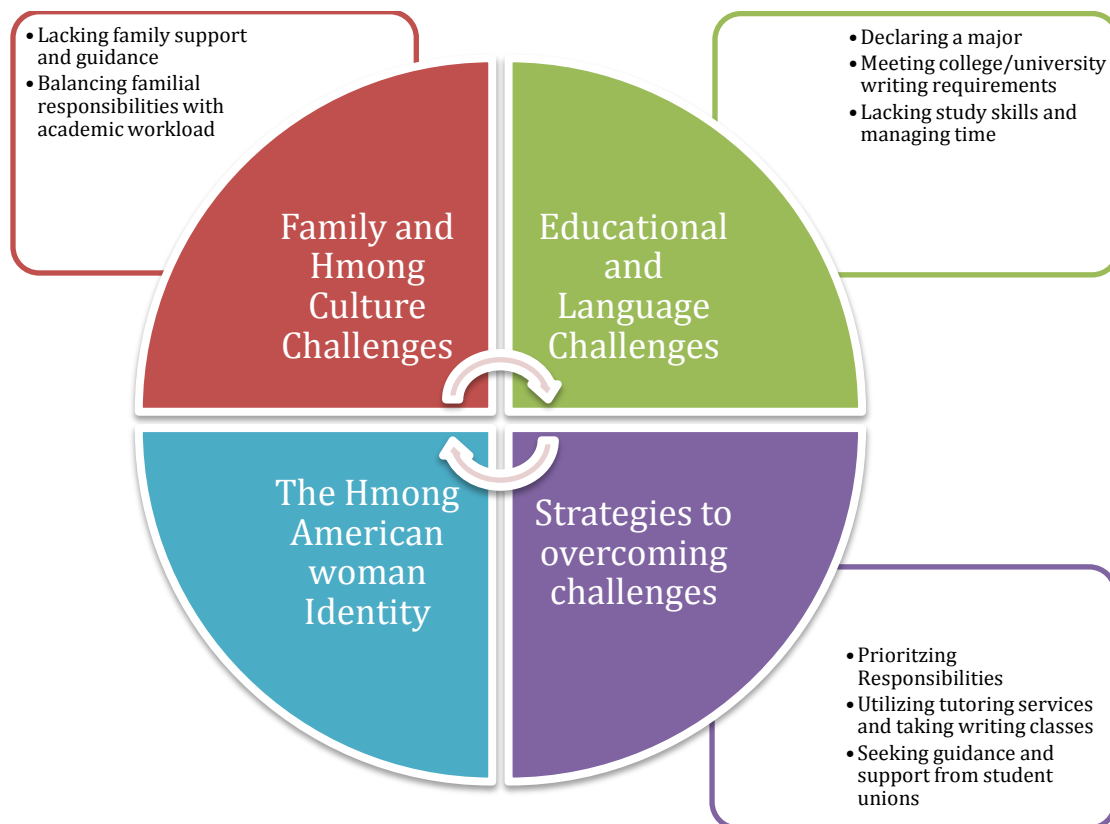


Figure 4. Themes and subthemes.

Family and Cultural Challenges

All five participants shared stories regarding the challenges they faced with their family and the Hmong culture during their pursuit of their post-secondary degree. These challenges included a lack of family support or guidance and the need for balancing family responsibilities with academic workload.

Lacking family support or guidance. All five participants shared that they did not have the option to attend college. As a child or a teenager, each participant knew they were going to a college. Although each participant was aware she was expected to attend college, she did have a family member to offer guidance or support.

Pa expressed that going to college was not an option for her. It was a requirement for her as the oldest child.

It was always you had to go to school. It wasn't like an option of not going to school. So, growing up it was always a thing to do in my family. It wasn't an option for me to not go to college at all. The only option was for me to continue my education after high school. So being aware of that I wanted to go to college was not something I became aware of but was an uprising I lived with. So, it wasn't as much as a decision, but more of the only option left.

As the first child to attend college, Pa explained that both her parents never went to college and were unable to provide advice to her. Pa felt cheated because everything she did was with trial and error.

Part of being a first-generation college student is that I don't have my parents to help me. Everything I did was a first learn basis. What is successful came from a trial and error approach. It was not from what my parents went through. I mean if my parents had a higher education, they would say "Oh try this." It was more of "This didn't work so I am going try this" for me. The struggle of like trying to figure out where I stand and what I needed to do was hard.

By her senior year, Shoua knew she was going to be attending CSUS. When asked how she knew, Shoua explained that both her older siblings were already attending CSUS.

I wouldn't say it was a dream to go to college. But it was more just like an expectation for me. I knew by my senior year in high school that I was going to college and that I was going to Sac State. Both my older brother and sister were there. I mean they both went to Sac State for college so, I knew I was going there. So being aware of when I wanted to go was not something that happened to me because I knew I was going.

Even though Shoua had two older siblings in college, she mentioned that they were unable to help her with her struggles in college.

Even though I have older siblings who went to college. They were too busy dealing with their own situations. They didn't help me much. During my first three years, I struggled to choose a major. When I first enrolled in the college, I was a psychology major. I thought I was going to like psychology, but after

taking a few classes, I realized that it was not for me. I switched over to digital media and really enjoyed the classes, but when I realized that the career of a digital media major was going to be busy and may even make it hard for me to have a family, I switched majors again. I went into biology.

Reflecting back on her experiences, Shoua felt she could have avoided the mistakes she made if she had someone guiding her.

It was a good experience for me. I am very grateful to learn through the mistake. Thinking back, it was not a major mistake. It was just changing majors one or two times and taking classes that I could have avoided taking. But it was a mistake, one that could be avoided if I had someone who told me about each of those majors I selected. But like I said, it was a mistake that made me grow, individually and professionally. So, my experiences in college were actually really good.

In high school, Chee knew she was going to attend UC Davis because her brother was already attending the university.

I had an older brother attending Davis when I was in a senior in high school. So, I knew that I was going to go to college and come to Davis too, because I didn't want to attend Fresno State University. It was too close to home. Plus, it was not a prestigious university.

Although Chee had a brother in college, she shared that by the time she relocated to Davis and started her college experiences, her brother had dropped out of the university. As a result, Chee did not have anyone to help or support her while she was in college.

When I moved up to here to go to the Davis, my brother actually dropped out and went back home. So, I was by myself. It was definitely a change for me because I was the only one in college. Besides that, I was a girl who was going to the college in another city. I left my family who lived in Fresno and I came to Davis. It was a different environment. And, my family wasn't right there with me. So, it took a bit of getting used to because I didn't have them to support me.

In her senior year, Yer knew she was going to go to college because she had four older brothers in college. With this knowledge, it was not hard for her to decide on which college she wanted to attend.

My older sister got married in her junior year in high school and never attended college. I had three older brothers that went to either a city or technical college. I have another brother. The one that is older than me. He went to UC Davis. So, when I was a senior in high school, I knew I was going to college. I knew I wanted to go to UC Davis.

Although Yer was able to choose her college, she struggled to gain the support of her mother.

My mother wanted me to go to a city college because I was going to be the first daughter to go to college. She wanted me to live at home. But I went to Davis because I did not want to live at home. She was not happy with my decision but my brother convinced her to allow me to go. I guess that is why she always asked that I move back home. I remember her telling me to move back home and live with her after my first year at Davis. She said that I could commute to Davis. But I didn't want to so I moved in to live with my brother and boyfriend my second year at Davis. My mother was not happy with my decision. I remember one time she had my older sister talk to me about moving back home. But I didn't. Things got worse when my father passed away. My mother begged me to move back home. I felt pressured and did consider moving back home since my father passed away and my mother was sad. I even considered marrying my boyfriend at that time, so she stopped pressuring me. But I didn't because we were having problems. It was hard for me.

Yer mentioned that with her mother pressuring her and her father's death, she was stressed and sought counseling from the student health center.

After my father passed away and my mother constantly pressuring me, I was very stressed. Even one of my art professors notice because she asked to speak with me after class. She told me that I wasn't producing the art work for the class and I wasn't giving my full participation in class. When I told her about my situation, she didn't feel that she was licensed help me through my struggle so she recommended me to CAPS. She even walked me over and that is how I started seeking counsel.

Nou never had the opportunity to decide if she wanted to attend college. She also expressed that she did not have a choice when it came to choosing which college to attend.

Growing up, my parents will always say, "Okay, you will go to school. You go from elementary to middle to high school to college." So, going to college was

never my choice. It was something I had to do. So of course, you were going to go to college and finish college. That was how it is and how it was embedded in my head. Which is why during my senior year, I applied to college. I mean Davis. Thinking back, going to Davis was not my choice. My dad wanted me to attend a University of California. However, I was not allowed to attend a university far away. So, I ended up going to Davis.

Nou also shared that she was excited about attending UC Davis at first because she knew she had more freedom there than she did in high school. After spending a year at UC Davis, Nou did not want to be there because she did not like the class size.

It's been so long, so I can't say much, but when I first got Davis, I knew that there were doors opening up for me. I mean having the ability to do more without my parents' approval. Plus, it's a big campus. But I did not like the classes I had taken so far. They were really big classes. Obviously, because they were lectures. So, it is really big. I mean I just sit there and I listen and I get bored and I get distracted. At city college, the classes are small, so I can't get distracted because the professor will be staring at me and I can't do that. So, that is probably why I left Davis.

Reflecting back, Nou shared that if her parents supported her decision to attend the college of her choice, she would not have wasted a year at UC Davis and would have finished her degree in a shorter time frame.

Originally, I wanted to go to a small college like Sacramento City College or Sac State. You know a school with small classes where the professor pays attention to you and where everyone knows everyone. But my father did not want me to go there because I had two cousins that went to Davis and it was a more prestigious university. So, I ended up wasting a year there, just to please my parents.

As first-generation college students, all five participants mentioned their parents were unable to guide them through college. As a result, the five participants struggled to navigate their way through college.

Balancing family responsibilities with academic workload. In their stories, all five participants expressed their struggle to balance their responsibilities as Hmong

daughters and college students. Pa shared that she felt that by living away from home, she did not have to perform her role as the oldest Hmong daughter.

Since I lived on campus, I didn't have to come home to cleaning the house, take care of the family or picking up after my sibling as a second job. By living by myself, I just had to come home to just come home and study. So definitely living on campus, I had that freedom to be more focus on my education compared to if I was to stay at home.

Although Pa did not have to perform her duties and spent more time studying, she explained that she never escaped her duties.

Because I lived away from home and on campus, I didn't have an immediate family to attend to. But when I did come home, my family was always saying, "Oh, you are never home so these are the things you missed and you need to do them." It was not as if I went away to school and I didn't have any of those obligations or any of those roles to play but it was more of like those obligations were held off until I came back.

As a freshman in college, Nou did not live in the dorms. She lived at home and commuted. By living at home, Nou struggled to balance her schoolwork with her duties as a Hmong daughter.

My parents have always told me what it meant to be a good daughter. This means knowing and learning how to cook and clean and make sure the house is clean and spotless. It also means taking care of my brothers and making dinner for the family each night.

Nou shared that it was hard to balance her chores and academic workload, especially when she also worked part-time.

Even though I went school a whole entire day and then I go to work. I had to come home and make sure there is rice in the rice cooker. I had to also make sure that the kitchen is clean before I could even have time to actually study and do my homework. There were days when I would go to sleep very late and wake up early because I had class. It was hard for me. I had to be both a student and a daughter. I could not be one or the other.

Yer's parents expected her, as a Hmong daughter, to be obedient and caring. When her father became ill, Yer was expected to make a contribution to her family. This contribution involved her being present and assisting her mother in taking care of her father. It also required her to ease her mother's suffering and stress. Yer recalled a moment in which her mother pressured her to return home.

When my father was diagnosed with leukemia, my mother did not know how to deal with his cancer. She needed help with her depression. I remember she called me one day and said, "Your father is giving me a hard time at home. I do not know how to cope with it. When are you planning to come home?" I was trying to explain to her why I could not be home for the weekend. She started crying and said, "You don't love me at all. When you finally come home, I will already be dead." After saying this, all I heard was the end of the phone and the end of my post-secondary education.

With her mother pressuring her, she felt the need to return home and help take care of her father. However, she also knew the benefit a post-secondary education could provide her in the long run and wanted to continue. With this dilemma taking place, Yer decided to seek help from her boyfriend.

During this difficult period, I also felt the pressure to marry my ex-boyfriend. However, when I asked my ex-boyfriend if I could continue to stay in Davis to finish my undergraduate after we got married, he said, "If I become your husband, you will need to listen to me and stay where I live." I was sad and disappointed in how he did not consider what I wanted for my education. I just knew marriage was not my answer.

Shoua expressed that as a Hmong daughter, she did not have the leisure her brothers have. She had to make sure dinner was provided for the family and check that there were enough household items and food for the family.

Our responsibility as a Hmong daughter is really tough. I don't have the leisure like my brothers do. It is like everything is up to my sister and me. We have to be responsible for preparing dinner and checking on that household items and food. I am always asking myself the questions, "What is in the house? What is not in the house? Do we still have this and that?"

Aside from her household responsibilities, Shoua also had cultural obligations. Shoua explained that she came from a big family and a big family clan. She also shared that her father is one of the elders of the family clan. As a result of this, she always attended cultural practices on the weekend.

When you belong to a big clan like me, it is so much. It is like you have your family and then you have extended family, who you can't disregard because they are also family. So, it is a very busy life for me on the weekends. We have cultural practices like blessing ceremonies, spiritual rituals or gatherings, and funerals on the weekend. And I always end up going to these events. So, I kind of have to squeeze in my studies on the weekends. But when I have a big project, I can't squeeze them on the weekdays. Our cultures they're not something that is easy. It is not like you can spend two or three hours at it. It is the whole day and sometimes it takes a whole week to prepare. So, it actually slows me down in my academic pursuit. This makes my weekend very hard. I think that is why I couldn't be academically successful.

Shoua expressed that she never learned how to balance her family and cultural obligations with her schoolwork as a college student. As a college student and Hmong daughter, each participant faced the struggle of balancing their family responsibilities with their academic workload.

Theme summary. All five participants knew their parents expected them to attend college after high school. But they did not receive any guidance from their parents, making it difficult for them to navigate college. In addition to this challenge, the participants also struggled to balance their responsibilities. As Hmong daughters, they were expected to fulfill their gender role. As college students, they were expected to meet a variety of college requirements while maintaining a good academic standing.

Educational and Language Challenge

All five research participants shared stories regarding the challenges they faced associated with the post-secondary educational system and the English language. These challenges included deciding on a major, meeting the college's/university's writing requirement, and learning how to study and manage time.

Deciding on a major. As first-generation college students, all five research participants shared stories regarding their struggle to identify a major. Shoua struggled to decide on a major and career path, and shared that she spent three years exploring various fields of study before finally making a decision. Hence, she took six years to complete her degree.

I remember the first three years I went there I was pretty much exploring. I took a few classes in psychology the first year thought I was very serious in psychology so I declare my major in psychology. But when I realized it was not the path that I really liked then I changed to digital media. I fell in love with digital media. I was thinking that I was going to do with digital media. I took two years in digital media and then I realized how the career path looked. It was going to be a very busy type of work where it would be hard for me to have a family. The pay was based on the project so, there could be days when I don't get to sleep and work overtime. So, I switched from that to biology. The switch to biology was kind of weird and a big jump. When I made the switch, I was planning to become a pharmacist and go into the medical field. It took me another three years to finish my biology classes and graduate.

Like Shoua, Pa struggled to decide on a major. Pa mentioned that when she applied to the UC Davis, she went in as an English major. But with her challenges with the English language, Pa decided to pursue her degree in another field of study.

I actually started off as an English major, not even thinking of human development or Japanese. Human development was more like a fallback and Japanese was an interest. I got interested in human development. When I took the course, I was taking it to fulfill my general education requirement. But after taking a human development class, I became interested in the field and was thinking about pursuing a career in counseling. As for Japanese like I said it was

an interest. It started with my interest in Japanese anime, but when I started taking the classes I became interested in the culture and food of the Japanese.

Chee shared that when she started college, she was a math major. After taking a few math courses, Chee realized math was not her strong suit. “When I applied to UC Davis I was a math major. I took math classes. Then, unfortunately, I dropped out, but I came back.” When asked why she dropped the major, Chee shared that math was hard for her. She also mentioned she wanted to pursue a degree in philosophy, but found the class to be too hard for her.

I took the 22 Calculus math classes my first quarter at Davis. It was more difficult than the 16 Calculus math class, but I was required for my major. So, I dropped the major. After that, I wanted to go into philosophy, but I was not an abstract thinker. It was hard for me. Even though it was just the general philosophy class that I took. For me it was difficult because I couldn't understand the concepts. So, I decided to explore other majors.

By her third year, Chee noticed she was taking many Human Development classes and decided to declare her major in Human Development.

After that, I started taking classes that meet my general education requirement and realized that I was taking more Human Development classes by the third year. So, I decided to just declare my major in Human Development. So, it was just a fall back for me.

Nou explained that she decided to pursue a science major because she wanted to be a forensic scientist like those actors on the television show called *CSI*.

I thought about working with dead people, and then I was always watching those forensic sciences, those *CSI* stuff. I was so interested in all that stuff. Then I think I took classes at Davis, and it was just not for me, and I was like, “Oh god, is this all the science classes I have to take? Oh god, I am not the typical Asian where I am good at math and science, oh god, I can't do this.”

After realizing that science was not her strong suit, Nou felt like she was lost and decided to take a break from school. While working, Nou started to establish a passion for

teaching and decided to attend Sacramento City College to pursue her degree in liberal studies.

I actually took a year off after Davis, and then, during that time, year off, I found a part-time job as a teacher's assistant. It was only a few hours, it wasn't that bad. It was during this time, I realized that I wanted to be a teacher.

When choosing a major, all five participants struggled to identify a field of study that would spark their interest and align with the career path of their choice.

Meeting the college's/university's writing requirement. As English language learners, four research participants shared that one of their biggest struggles was passing their college's/university's writing requirement. Pa shared that because she was unable to meet the UC Davis writing requirement by passing the Subject A exam, she had to take three writing courses in her first year.

At Davis, you have a year to actually pass that Subject A. For me the struggle was taking the test. I took the English workload class three times and still did not pass the exam even though I did really well in that class.

When asked why she could not pass the test, Pa shared that she felt she was not prepared for the exam.

I did not go to a private or college prep high school. I went to a public high school and I was not taught and prepare for college. I didn't have the skills to write at the college level. I could not even understand how to put a sentence together where the subject and verb agreed with each other. Plus, I didn't even know how to write an essay. I guess that is why I failed the exam.

Like Pa, Yer struggled to meet the UC Davis writing requirement. Yer mentioned she did not pass the Subject A exam and had to take a university writing course her first quarter.

I remember in my first year I was placed in the UWP English course. I think it was one of the lowest English course designed to help you write at the college level. I remember taking the test the first time while I was in high school. I

didn't pass it. I was really sad. But the second time, after taking the course, I passed it. I was able to take regular English courses after that.

By taking the exam twice, Yer was able to meet the university's writing requirement.

Nou also had to take the Subject A exam when she was attending UC Davis. She shared that she always thought her writing skills were good, but after taking the Subject A exam, she realized she was not writing at the college level.

I always thought I had good writing skills and knew the English language. I mean I always got good grades on my essays in high school. But when I took the Subject A exam and I got my results, I realized that I was not writing at the college level. I had to take a linguistic course before taking the college writing course. When I was taking the linguistic course, my first quarter, I felt so stupid. My professor went over the parts of speech and sentence structure and the use of commas. It was so elementary stuff to me. I didn't like the course but I had to take it. So, I just went because I needed to fulfill the requirement. Thinking back, it was such a waste of my time. I mean I left the university and went to like City College later on and didn't have to fulfill a writing requirement like that. I mean City College did have some kind of writing test for me to take but I passed it.

As English learners, three of the five participants struggled to meet their university's writing requirement and had to take additional writing classes.

Learning how to study and manage time. All five participants shared stories about their struggle to study and manage their time. Yer shared that she had a limited English vocabulary. She noticed that when studying for her classes, she spent more time trying to figure out the meaning of words she did not know than trying to comprehend what she was reading.

I'm a really good reader. I like to read, but I think when it comes to reading or studying the terms that they use, I don't think I have a strong vocabulary. If I read and I get stuck or if there are too many terms that I don't know. I don't have the comprehension already to understand what I'm reading. If I need to define each word, it becomes that I have to connect, so "This will mean this." It's a lot to process.

Reflecting back on her college experience, Yer shared that she had poor study habits to begin with and had to develop her study skills as she continued her education.

Reflecting back on my college experience, I felt like I had really poor study habits. It was really different from high school, because in college I think Davis was a really fast pace. I think I couldn't keep up with all the classes. I remember in my second year, I had to study for two classes at the same time. This was hard and I took a long time studying for them. During this time, I was just reading the books for my classes and reading my lecture notes. During the end of my fourth year, I started to record my professor's lectures and listening them while reviewing my notes. When I was doing this, I noticed that there was part of the lecture that I was not able to write down in my notes.

Nou mentioned that she has poor study habits and would often spend the night before the exam cramming.

My professors always recommended me to study ahead of time by reading the materials. My professors didn't offer me a study guide so I always felt that I have to read and learn everything. I guess that is why I spend all night studying. I mean I was always afraid that I would miss something. Also, I didn't set enough time for me to prepare for exams. I mean, if there was an exam on Friday, I waited until Thursday night, and that's when I crammed everything like crazy. I had really poor study habits in college.

Nou also shared that during her college experiences she experimented with different study methods.

In my first year at Davis, I would make flash cards. It took me forever to make them and then when I use them to study, I got bored with them so I ended up not learning anything. I even tried using acronyms too, but it didn't work. After this, I knew that flash cards and acronyms did not work for me. When I went back to college, about like a year later, I just read everything and wrote notes and then re-write my notes when I study for exams. This helped me more so, I just did that until I graduated.

Pa indicated that her biggest struggle with studying was finding the time to study.

During her first year in college, Pa was a member of the Hmong Student Union. The Hmong Student Union is a student association established to provide encouragement and support to Hmong students. Pa loved how the club was able to provide her support and

connect her to other Hmong students, particularly those who were further along in their studies. However, she soon realized that her involvement with the club started to influence her academic performance.

I realized freshman year that who I socialize with and what people I socialize with, pretty much determines how well I do in school. Freshman year, I didn't do as much, but I did a decent amount with HSU, the Hmong Student Union there. In the process of that, I realized how much I should put in, how much I shouldn't. I've seen a lot of my peers go through the motions of education and trying to associate themselves with pretty much the social aspect of HSU and ended up feeling really bad.

After realizing the impact the club had on her academic performance, Pa decided to distance herself from the club and focus on her academics.

I didn't step into any figure role in HSU or use any of the clubs which gave me an opportunity step back. I'm like, "Oh, I don't want to do this anymore." In that sense, I tend to sit back away a little bit more and realize that who I socialize with is actually a good and a bad thing. It's a good thing that I am able to get a better idea of what's going on, but it's a bad thing in the sense of it takes a lot of my time. If that time needs to be studied, I'm more willing to go. I'm like, "Hey, I'm going to go study with a study group than oh, I'll go to an HSU meeting."

Pa expressed that this experience taught her how to manage her time between her social activities and studies. By her third year in college, she was able to manage her time and decided to work part-time.

In my junior and senior year, I got to a point where I'm just like I was able to sustain my workload. I know how well that I study. I worked as a retention coordinator for as long as I did. I did some research work with one of the professors from a religious studies department. In those content those was more of super flexible. I was able to be on campus, to be working around my class schedule and around my time, but in the sense of getting a part-time job as set hours, I was hesitant because I didn't know how much that affected me during the evening because I am more of a night owl or evening studier.

She also stated that after spending two years adjusting and assimilating to the college setting, she started to understand her own behaviors and procrastinated less.

I know myself well enough to not do any classes before 10 but from 10 to 5, I'm able to go to class and then after 6 and onward, I like to study. I know myself in that sense that I was scared to take classes between 6 to 10:00 pm. I know after 12:00 am, my brain doesn't get anywhere nothing done. I also know that I don't perform well under pressure. So, I try not to be under pressure. I make sure to have enough time to where if the papers are due Friday, I would like to have it started on the weekend before. So, by Monday, I am almost halfway done and Wednesday is when I was done. This gives me Thursday to review and edit it before turning it in on Friday. Aside for managing my time when writing papers. I also learned how to read before her class. On the weekend, I would read chapter 1, 2, and 3 for Monday's lecture instead of just skim it.

Because Chee could not manage her time wisely, she struggled to write papers in college.

In college, I used to pull all-nighters. You know when, you know I was the girl who studied like the night before. If there was a paper due, I would at least do my research maybe the week of. I know, I was so bad. A lot of the time, my ideas were good, but my grammar sucked. My grammar was bad, but that's just because I did it so late and I didn't have the chance to go back and correct everything.

She also struggled to study for exams because she did not know how to take notes in class or study for exams.

In college, a lot of my professor used PowerPoint. They actually gave us the PowerPoint so I didn't take notes in class. I just sat there and listened. When studying for exams, I just read and highlighted anything I think was important. The funny part was that I ended up highlighting everything.

Chee shared that she never learned how to study in college.

Reflecting back, I can't even believe that I passed all my classes. I didn't know how to study for my exams or take notes. But somehow, I passed these classes. I guess reading and highlighting those PowerPoints kind of paid off.

In their first year in college, all five participants realized that although they graduated from high school, they did not have the necessary study skills to succeed in college, forcing them to acquire the skills while they pursued their degrees.

Theme summary. All five participants expressed their frustration with the college educational systems and English language. As first-generation college students, they did not have parents or family members who could advise them to choose a major that aligned with their interest or career goals. Additionally, they also struggled to learn the necessary study skills and writing skills for them to succeed in college.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges in College

All five participants shared stories regarding their approach to overcoming the challenges they faced in their pursuit for a post-secondary degree. These approaches include prioritizing responsibilities, utilizing tutoring and counseling services, and seeking guidance and support from friends or student unions.

Prioritizing responsibilities. When it came to dealing with the challenge of balancing their family and cultural responsibilities with their academic workload, four of five research participants shared that they had to prioritize their responsibilities.

Although she lived away from home, Pa still had family responsibilities. To ensure that she focused on her studies, she would only return home when she did not have major assignments or was not taking finals.

Since my responsibilities were always waiting for me when I came home, there came a point where I didn't come at all. The only time I would come is when I know I didn't have finals or when I know I didn't have any big pressing projects that need my attention. Aside from my vacation breaks from school, those were the times when I came home.

Pa shared that by not going home, she was able to focus on her studies and participate in certain events and organization at UC Davis.

During my first year, I was involved with the Hmong Student Union. I was not a leader of the club, but a member. I attended some of the study sessions and social gatherings hosted by the club. At these events, I met other Hmong students. I

even got assigned a Big sister, who was in her third year in college. She helped me adjust to the college life and guided me during my first year in college.

During her first year at UC Davis, Chee indicated that she struggled to manage her family responsibilities and academic workload. As the oldest daughter, Chee was responsible for paying her parents' bills. When she moved to Davis, it was hard for her parents to not rely on her. As a result, Chee had to learn how to say no to her parents and focus on her studies.

When I was in high school, I was helping my mom pay the bills because she knew limited English and I'm pretty fluent in it so, of course, I would help my mom pay for bills and other things too. When I went off to college, it was hard for me pay their bills because I'm all the way in Davis. However, there were still times when they would call me and asked me questions about the bills or ask me to do stuff for them. That was hard for them to stop calling me. At first, I didn't mind and I kept helping them, but as time went by I realize that I could not do it anymore because I started to worry about them. I mean I knew they were okay, but I worry about the bills not being paid. But when I noticed how my worrying started to affect my grades, I had to tell them no.

Nou shared that during her college pursuit, she had three roles to play: (a) a Hmong daughter, (b) a college student, and (c) a part-time employee. To ensure that she performed all the responsibilities associated with each of her roles, she designated particular times to certain roles.

To make my life easier, I would attend class or work during the day. Then, I would spend my nights studying for my classes. I also worked on the weekend. I guess that is why I couldn't attend some of my family gatherings or cultural practices.

Nou mentioned that because she had to play three roles, it took her longer to finish her degree than her peers.

It took me almost 10 years to get my bachelor's degree when some of my friends finished in like 4 to 5 years. That is because I had to work, go to school, and take care of my family too. Unlike most of my friends, both my parents worked so my parents had to pay a portion of my tuitions. I did not qualify for financial aid.

Since my parents were paying for my tuition, they didn't have money for me to spend so I had to work. I couldn't even work full-time because I was in school full-time. So, I worked part-time and took classes when I didn't work. This made it hard because there were certain classes that I have to wait a few semesters to take the class.

Like Nou, Shoua also had to designate particular times of the day to her responsibilities as a Hmong daughter and a college student.

During the day, I would attend class. In the evening, I would come home and make dinner for the family. There were even times when I had to go shopping for household supplies and food. Then around, like 9 to 12 or even 2 or 3 in the morning I would study for my classes. It was hard for me because there were days when I had class early in the morning.

Reflecting back on her struggles to balance her responsibilities, Shoua expressed that she often envied her brothers.

My brothers are very lucky. I mean they don't have to face the same challenges that my sister and I do because we are daughters. We always have to take care of the household. Like buying things for the household, making sure there is food, cooking dinner, and then cleaning up the household. And if we didn't do those things, my parents would give us a long lecture about being a good Hmong daughter. They would also say, "you need to learn how to do these things and also do them because when you become a daughter-in-law you have to do it."

To overcome their challenges in balancing their family responsibilities with their academic workload, the participants had to learn how to prioritize their responsibilities and organize their daily or weekly schedule.

Utilizing tutoring services and taking writing classes. Four of the five research participants shared stories pertaining to their struggle with the English language and the college's/university's writing exam. In each of their stories, the research participants shared several approaches they took to overcome these challenges. Pa expressed that passing her university's writing exam was the hardest thing for her to do. She explained

that her inability to pass her writing exam was due to a failure within the educational system.

Thinking back, the hardest encounter I had as a college student was actually recognizing that my level of understanding and my level learning was never equal to everybody who went the same university. What I meant by this is that as first-year college students, we all got in based on our unique situation and abilities. But where we all went to school was different. I guess what I am trying to say is that I went to a public high school, where there was limited funding and the teachers were not strict or hard on us. So, in comparison to someone who went to a college prep school or a private school, I didn't know or learn as much. I guess that is why it was hard for me to pass my writing exams and do well in my classes my first few years at UC Davis.

Pa shared that to pass her exam, she had to step back and take a writing class that taught her how to improve her writing skills.

To compensate for that, I took writing classes. I also took a step back by taking a class that allowed me to understand what I was lacking in my writing. I learned that my sentence structure was weak because there were times when my subject did not agree with the verb. Reflecting back to my high school or even elementary and middle school years, I don't recall learning about sentence structure. To compensate for this, I feel like I have to step back, which held me back. I mean I took longer to pass my writing exam. Now, as I look back, I see it as a good thing. A good thing because I was able to go back and understand certain style and writing skills that I was never taught.

Despite her efforts to learn how to write, Pa shared that it took her a year to pass her exam.

I never had proper preparation to write at a college level throughout high school and even while I was taking the classes in college in like my first year. I would do well in the class, but every single time I take the test it would never come out with a good enough score to pass. At Davis, you have a year to actually pass that subject A. It was kind of like a mechanism the university used to weed out students who were unable to write at the college level. For me, I took the test and the workload writing class three times and I did not pass even though I did well in the class. I guess I was not good at taking time tests. When I couldn't pass the test my third time, I went and talked to the English department. I told them my situation and how I am doing well in class. I could write, but when it comes to the actual writing test I could not pass it. So, they told me that there is another option of keeping a portfolio of all my essays in class and all the tests I had done

in class. And at the end of my three quarters if I didn't pass any of the test, I could submit that portfolio and they could evaluate it. And if I did pass, then that would be my passing score for my subject A exam. So, I never did pass the writing part, but I did pass the writing subject A by actually submitting my portfolio into the English department.

By inquiring about her options, Pa was able to pass her written exam and continue to attend UC Davis to complete her degree. Yer shared that in her first year at UC Davis, she had to take a writing class because she did not pass her Subject A exam.

I remember, in my first year, I was placed in the UWP English course. I think it was one of the lowest English course designed to help you write at the college level. I remember taking the test the first time while I was in high school. I didn't pass it. I was really sad. But the second time, after taking the course, I passed it. I was able to take regular English courses after that.

When asked how Yer was able to pass the exam, she shared that she took the UWP English course.

When I was taking the UWP English classes, I learned how to write. I learned how to outline and structure my essays. It was very simple once my professor taught me the method. I started with an introduction paragraph with a thesis statement. Then a body full of supports for the thesis statement. Followed by a conclusion. I also learned that I have some grammar errors too. But my professor taught me how to fix them. That is why I was able to pass the exam on my second time.

Nou shared that she never passed her Subject A exam while she was attending UC Davis.

I always thought I had good writing skills and knew the English language. I mean I always got good grades on my essays in high school. But when I took the Subject A exam and I got my results, I realized that I was not writing at the college level. I had to take a linguistic course before taking the college writing course. When I was taking the linguistic course, my first quarter, I felt so stupid. My professor went over the parts of speech and sentence structure and the use of commas. It was so elementary stuff to me. I didn't like the course but I had to take it. So, I just went because I needed to fulfill the requirement. Thinking back, it was such a waste of my time. I mean I left the university and went to like City

College later on and didn't have to fulfill a writing requirement like that. I mean City College did have some kind of writing test for me to take but I passed it.

Nou shared that the writing test for Sacramento City College was not as hard as the one for UC Davis.

At City College, I had to take a writing test too. When I took the test, I pass so I just started to take English classes. It was not as hard and complicated as the test at Davis.

When asked why she thought she was able to pass the writing test at Sacramento City College on her first try, Nou shared that those classes at UC Davis might have helped.

I am not sure, but I think it might have been those English classes I took at Davis. I mean when I left Davis I knew how to write better than I did when I arrived there. So, it could have been just those classes. Then again, when I took a year off, I worked as a teacher assistant and taught elementary students. I recall that there were times when the teacher would teach the students how to write sentences and paragraphs and I helped. I guess I learned how to write during that time too.

To ensure the participants passed their writing requirement, each participant had to take additional writing courses. These courses taught the participants how to write by focusing on sentence structure and grammars.

Seeking guidance and support from student unions. As first-generation college students, all five research participants shared that they did not have a family member to help guide them in their college experiences. As a result, they had to find help from someone else. Pa, Chee, and Yer sought help and support from the Hmong Student Union at UC Davis.

Pa shared that during her first year, she was a member of the Hmong Student Union and participated in the organization's study sessions, social gatherings, and outreach program.

Freshman year, I didn't do as much, but I did a decent amount with HSU, the Hmong Student Union. I didn't step into any figure role in HSU but I participated. I took part in the club because a huge majority of my roommates and friends was in the club. So, it allowed me to interact with them. I also took part in the club because they offered help to us freshmen in college. There were study sessions that were held in different dorms or buildings. I went to those I got help. There were times when the older Hmong students, those who been at Davis from 2 to 5 years would give us freshmen tips on how to study, pick classes, or even study. I also participated in a Big Sib Little Sib program that the club hosted. What they did was pair a freshman with someone who had been at Davis for a while. I got paired with my Big Sis who I still keep in contact with. She was great. She provided me with so much help and served as both my mentor and counselor at the time.

Chee mentioned in her interview that she also took part in the Hmong Student Union at UC Davis her freshman year.

I came from Fresno, where there was a huge Hmong population, but the high school I attended did not have a good Hmong population. I remember during my freshman year, a group of Hmong students in the Hmong Student Union came to my dorm and talked to a group of us. They talked about what they can do for us. I was not interested at first, but I felt like I needed to be around Hmong students too, since I was here at Davis alone.

Unlike Pa, Chee was not as active in the club's events and gatherings.

In my first quarter, I went to the club meetings and met some of the Hmong students. I did not participate in a lot of the events that club offered. I don't know why. I guess I just wanted to connect to others like me. I mean other students who knew my culture and know some of my struggles. I recalled meeting my roommates at one of these meetings. I lived with them my second to fourth year at Davis and they helped me a lot and kept me grounded and connected to my culture.

Like Chee, Yer joined the Hmong Student Union to have a connection with other Hmong students. However, Yer was more active. She shared that in high school, she did not have many Hmong friends or participate in the Hmong club. But when she went to Davis, she decided to participate in the club.

I never really hung out with like Hmong people in high school or middle school. All my friends were mostly Chinese, Vietnamese and other ethnicities, but not so

much Hmong. In my first year, HSU started to reach out to freshmen. I remember going to one of their meetings and became involved in the club's events.

When asked why she decided to participate in the club, Yer mentioned that she felt the Hmong students of the club were more aligned with her.

When I was in high school, a lot of my Hmong friends did not have the motivation to go to college or even take college prep classes. They would always be saying, "We're not smart enough or we're not smart like you. We're not going to do it." I guess that is why I didn't want to join the Hmong club in my high school because most of them think that way. In college, it was different. Every Hmong student I met had some kind of academic goal and it made me feel comfortable being around them. That is why I joined the club.

In her second year, Yer decided to take a leadership role in the club to help freshmen Hmong students adapt to the college life like she received when she was a freshman.

In my second year, I became involved by taking on a leadership position and helped host events for future Hmong freshman students. I decided to become a leader in the club because I wanted to give others the same opportunity I had as a freshman.

When asked about what services and support she obtained from the club, Yer shared that she received both academic and social support. However, what stood out the most was the support the club offered her when her father passed away.

In like my third year, my father passed away. It was hard for me to cope with this. I was stressing and didn't perform well in my classes. HSU helped me get back on track because one of the requirements to being a leader in the club was that I had to have good academic standing. When I realized I was doing bad in my classes and my academic standing might change, I started to talk to my fellow leaders in the club about my situation. They listened to me and helped me. Some helped me by listening and providing comfort. Others took some of my leadership responsibilities so I can focus on studying. And some just made sure I studied and went to class.

The participants shared that they became members of the Hmong Student Union to compensate for the lack of support and guidance from their parents. This membership

allowed them to connect with other Hmong students who had gone through the same or similar challenges as they.

Theme summary. For each of the challenges the participants faced in their pursuit for a post-secondary degree, the participants shared stories regarding the approach they used to overcome those challenges. When the participants faced challenges associated with their family or culture, they sought support and guidance from the Hmong Student Union. When they faced challenges associated with the English language, the student took additional writing courses to strengthen writing skills.

Hmong American Woman Identity

When asked about the struggle with their ethnic identity during their college experience, all the research participants shared that they struggled to identify themselves as either a Hmong woman or American woman. Pa shared that she grew up knowing that the role of a Hmong woman is to become a housewife.

Although my mother was a working mom, I was raised by my parents to fulfill the role of being a housewife and mother. In high school, I had to always come home after school and pick up after my siblings. I was always the default second mother who cooked and cleaned up after everyone. It did not matter how hard I have it or how much I did or how much I had to study. I was the second mother. Growing up, I never heard the words, "oh you went to school, you have to study, you will have three midterms tomorrow, so, go study." It was more of, "Oh you came home. You didn't do this" or "No one has eaten so go cook and clean and pick up after your sibling and then go study."

Pa mentioned that when she went to college, she struggled to define her identity as a Hmong woman.

It was hard for me in college. I had a hard time trying to understand my role as a Hmong woman. My struggle was not knowing what it means to be a Hmong woman. I mean I learned and lived with the definition for like 18 years. The struggle was what it meant to be a Hmong American woman. Being a Hmong American woman is different. I had to be like two different people. I had to play

the role of a second mother or a housewife, even though I was not married because I am going to get married one day. And I had to be a college student who has classes, dreams, goals, and needed to be independent and learn how to make her own decisions. Being a college student also kind of meant not being a Hmong woman. I mean all the Hmong women I knew growing up didn't do that. They didn't make decisions for themselves or do things for themselves. They had to do it for others. So, when I was in college, it was hard. There were times when I come home and I could not be who I was. I had to be the nice, obedient, and caring one. I couldn't say no to my parents or family. This was frustrating because I was so used to being me.

Pa shared that after she finished college, she did not move back to live with her parents.

She took a teaching position in Korea and left the United States for a year. When she

returned, she rented an apartment with one of her sisters and lived by herself. When

asked why she never moved back, Pa mentioned that she could not live with the

inequalities within her culture and be the nice daughter her parents expected her to be as a child.

College has actually opened my eyes a lot to the gender equalities in our culture. Growing up you just don't think much of it because you grew up with the difference in the gender, but going to college, you realize that no matter how hard you try as a Hmong woman, there is always going to be that barrier that limits you. I guess you can say that there is kind of glass ceiling there. It is this glass ceiling that shapes the struggle I see in our culture, especially when it came to Hmong women. While in college, I realized that I stepped away from being Hmong more. So, when I finished college, I realized that no matter how hard I try being Hmong, I will always still have to face that ceiling. The gender role that I have as a Hmong woman and going to college and the college experiences has taught me how to speak up a little more. Before that, I was like always nod and agree even if I don't agree. But going to college and getting a degree, I realize that I have a voice even though in our culture my voice doesn't make a difference. I am a little more outspoken than most Hmong women and a little more talkative and more willing to express my opinion and say no. So yes, I definitely test the boundaries of being the quiet Hmong girl.

Since her college experiences, Pa has realized that being a Hmong woman was not something she could not do. But then again, she still could not escape her culture and

roles she had to play as a Hmong woman or daughter. As a result, she identified herself as a Hmong American woman.

I think for me, even though I am an American woman, the Hmong part is always there. As much as I want to say I am American, I am always Hmong before I am an American. So, it is not like I can distance myself from whatever role that I have idealized as a typical Hmong woman. It is always a Hmong American woman, so the Hmong part is always still there. It is always tacked on as this is what you are first before you are American. So being Hmong American. Yes, I am not as passive as your Hmong woman, but the roles and responsibilities of a Hmong woman still apply.

Nou shared that as a child growing up, her parents always taught her to be a good Hmong daughter and to always fulfill her parents' wishes.

My parents have always told me that being a good daughter is knowing, learning how to cook and clean and make sure your house is clean and spotless. Of course, it is just household chores and stuff like that. I think. It is just growing up I have this embedded in my head and I don't know what to do. Grow up in a family like that, I thought that it is the right thing to do. Until I got older and started seeing different things and families. I kind of wonder, "Why do I this and they don't do this." So of course, I question. But as a good daughter, I would fulfill those obligations. So, I guess being a good Hmong daughter meant fulfilling or doing what your parents would like you to do.

Nou expressed that she realized she did not have to be the good Hmong daughter her parents raised her to be during her time at Sacramento City College and CSUS.

I think realizing that I didn't have to be a good daughter when I was at Sac City and when I took classes Sac State. When I went to Davis, I was still thinking, "okay, this is what I need to do as a good daughter." Even though I don't have time and have stuff to do, which I did, I still did what I need to do as a good daughter. But as I get older, doors open and I realize that I can't technically do it all. Because if I want to pursue my goals, and my dream, I really can't satisfy everyone. I am not saying that I am going to throw everyone under the bus. It is not that. But I just have to prioritize what is important. And of course, I would still be a good daughter when I have time and when I am home. I would cook and clean and all that, but when I really don't have time, then I don't really need to do that.

Despite her experiences, Nou still felt she is both a Hmong woman and American woman.

I would say both [Hmong and American]. I say both because you know I still withhold that traditional value where my parents taught me. I still stick to my duties in my culture. But then again, we live in today's world. So, I pursue my goals and do what I have to do. And what I do might be out of the boundary of being a typical Hmong woman. But then again, I am not your typical Hmong woman. So, I would say both because I grow up here and I have two cultures in my life, which is why I mix my two languages at a time. I can't speak Hmong in one full sentence. I always use some English words. I don't do this on purpose, but it has just come out naturally like that.

Yer expressed that her college experience has changed her from being an obedient daughter to a disobedient one.

I feel it [college] has helped me too, or to be able to question things and not just accept them for what it is or because my parents or my mom would say that is how it is. By questioning my parents, especially my mom, I got into a lot of trouble. Thinking about this I can hear my older sister telling me, "you always used to be obedient. But now you never listen." So, I think that college has changed me. But I don't think it changed me for the worse.

Yer shared that when it comes to accepting her identity as a Hmong American woman, she still struggled with it.

I would say right now I am struggling with it. And when I think of being a Hmong woman, I think of someone that would put herself last. And that is something I can't do. Today, I live with my partner and we are not married. And this is not something you do in the Hmong culture. I know that my family talks about it and don't approve it, but they just have to accept it one day. Aside from this, I am still struggling to accept my role as a Hmong woman. Like I said my partner and I have been living together for a while now and I can't bring myself to marry him. The reason behind that is because I somehow force myself to conform back to the traditional Hmong woman role. When I think about it, I am scared. I am scared that I can't be able to have control of my life and how I raise my kids.

Chee shared that her perception of what a Hmong woman is is different than that of many young Hmong women today because she was raised differently. Chee shared

that as a child growing up, her parents raised her to learn how to cook, clean, and take care of her siblings.

To me, it was the idea that, well, you have to learn how to cook. You have to learn how to clean the house. You have to basically take care of your brothers and sisters. For me, that was a huge part of how I was growing up. Then I guess you can say that it is different than how my sister was raised, but for me it was kind of, we're all daughters.

She also indicated that her parents also raised her to be a quiet and respectful child.

You have to be kind of like respectful. You can't really be talking out and you have to be doing whatever they tell you to do, you know? That's how I grew up throughout my whole life. Even in college, I don't. I guess you can say I was quiet. I was kind of this typical Asian, where I didn't really talk unless you asked me questions. I didn't really voice my opinion. I didn't really ask questions in class.

Based on her understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Hmong women and her experiences in the American society, Chee identifies herself as both a Hmong and American woman. However, she feels she is more Hmong than American.

I think I'm in the middle, but that's just my opinion. Yes, I do know what the American society expects me to be and I do know what they expect us individuals to be. Then I understand my role in the Hmong culture. I understand how to cook. In a lot of aspects, I feel like I'm more Hmong than I am American because I can cook Hmong food, you know? American food, I am still working on it.

Shoua identifies herself as both Hmong and American. However, she feels she is more connected to her Hmong culture than the American culture. Shoua explained that because of her father's unique role as a clan leader, she often finds herself attending cultural practices on the weekend.

I think I am more Hmong than American because I spend more time now with my Hmong culture. I am a teacher at the Hmong charter school, so I am always teaching my Hmong students about our history. I also help in organizing cultural events here. And as a daughter, I spend time taking care of my parents and going to weekend practices. It is hard, you know, especially when my father is the

leader of my family. When I say family I just don't mean my family, but our clan here in Sacramento.

Shoua shared that unlike most of her cousins, she still displays some of the characteristics of a Hmong daughter or Hmong woman.

Being that I am Hmong and was raised to be a good daughter-in-law. I am quite different from my younger cousins and even sisters. I mean, I am not as outgoing or outspoken as them. Plus, I tend to consider my actions and words and its influence on my family and elders. I mean I consider before I act. Plus, I also know there are boundaries that I can't cross or things that I can't change, and I don't try to. I guess you can say I just accept them for what they are.

She also mentioned that is more in tune to her Hmong culture and identity because she speaks and write in her native language.

Nowadays, a lot of the younger Hmong people don't know how to speak our language. I mean they can talk to their parents and elders but then they always have a hard time putting sentences together. It is like they have a smaller Hmong vocabulary. I guess that is why it is hard for them to speak Hmong. I, on the other hand, I can still speak Hmong. I guess it is because I speak to my elders and also because I teach the Hmong language at my school too.

Shoua explained that because she pursued her college degree and delayed her marriage, she feels she is also American.

Being that I have my college degree now. I don't think I am traditional. I mean I am not the traditional Hmong woman. I am more proactive and I make decisions pertaining to my life and sometimes my family too.

Theme summary. Prior to attending college, all five participants shared that they were well aware of their gender roles and responsibilities as a Hmong daughter. During their pursuit of a post-secondary degree, the participants realized that although they are expected to fulfill their gender and cultural roles, they had the ability to choose. As a result, many of the participants shared that they are unable to fulfill their gender and cultural roles, making them question their identity as Hmong women. Through this

questioning process, many of them were able to identify themselves as being both an American woman and a Hmong woman.

Summary of Findings

The participants of this study provided an understanding of the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college. Each participant shared stories about their college experiences through the lens of the struggles they faced and the approaches each of them took to overcome them. Among the conflicts each participant shared, stories about their struggle to balance their responsibilities as a Hmong daughter with their studies were the most common. In their stories, each participant shared that they were often put in a situation where they had to make a decision between their family responsibilities and academic goals. As a result, they had to learn to prioritize their responsibilities in order to succeed. Prioritization involved them saying no to their parents, designating particular times to certain roles/responsibilities, and reducing their visits home.

The participants also shared stories about their struggle to identify a field of study they were interested in pursuing. In each of their stories, the participants shared that their decision to pick a major was not based on interest but was by accident. Each participant shared that when they started their college journey, they had an idea of what field of study or career path they wanted to pursue. With the struggles they faced with their classes and meeting the college's writing and general education requirements, the participants ended up finishing their degree in a complete different field of study. The participants also shared stories regarding their challenges in meeting their college writing requirement. In these stories, it was mentioned that after failing to pass the writing exam,

they realized their writing skills were not at the college level and felt cheated by the educational systems because most of them did not recall ever being taught how to write properly.

When it came to understanding their ethnic identity, the participants shared that their understanding of their ethnic identity and role stemmed from their upbringing. Most of them never questioned the roles and responsibilities they were given by their parents until they went to college. During their times in college, the participants questioned their roles as Hmong daughters and noticed the inequality within their family regarding gender. As a result of this experience, a few of the participants found it hard to live with their parents and adhere to the traditional roles of Hmong daughters or Hmong women. Many of them did not identify themselves as a Hmong woman only, but as both a Hmong and American woman.

Results and Interpretation

Three results emerged from the four themes and eight subthemes as described in the study's findings. These three results are (a) the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college are framed through the lens of being first-generation college students, (b) Hmong American women in college struggle to balance their responsibilities associated with their roles as Hmong daughters and college students, and (c) Hmong American women who graduated from college or university are less likely to identify themselves as Hmong women. These three results are described and discussed through the lens of the literature review from Chapter 2 and were used to inform the conclusion and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Result One. The educational experiences of Hmong American women in college are framed through the lens of being first-generation college students.

All five participants in this study were first-generation college students. First-generation college students are defined as students who reported that neither of their parents had graduated from college (Atherton, 2014). When discussing their experiences in college, each participant shared stories pertaining to their struggle to adapt to the American college culture. In their stories, the participants emphasized that they knew going to college meant more independence for them, but they were not prepared to handle it, forcing them to drop out or leave the university for some time. This finding echoed Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, and Covarrubias's (2012) statement that the American college focus on independence undermined the performance of first-generation students from ethnic and low-income groups.

The participants also shared stories pertaining to their struggle in choosing a major. Choosing a major is a huge component of the American college culture and one for which the research participants were unprepared. Each participant started their college journey with an idea of what major and career they wanted to pursue. As the participants progressed through their first year, they faced some challenges that influenced them to switch majors or focus on taking courses to fulfill their general education requirements. Some of these challenges included passing the university or college's writing exam, rigorous courses, and lacking study and time management skills. The challenges that the five research participants experienced were similar to those experienced by first-generation college students in Gibbons, Rhinehart, and Hardin's (2016) research study.

A deeper investigation into the stories shared by the five research participants revealed that they were not well prepared for college and lacked the necessary writing skills to succeed. The research participants discussed their struggle to pass the college's or university's writing exam. In their stories, the participants shared that they were unable to pass their college's writing test. As a result, they had to take a writing course that prepared them for the test and focused on providing them with an understanding of the English language by discussing sentence structure and grammar. The challenges they faced with the English language supported Vang's (2005) conclusion that Hmong students lacked the necessary English skills to succeed in school. Additionally, their struggle with the English language supported Atherton's (2014) conclusion that first-generation students are less academically prepared for college than traditional students.

Aside from lacking writing and English skills, the participants did not have familial support with regarding to understanding the rigors of college. All participants shared that while in high school, their parents were very supportive of them and even expected them to go to college. But when they were in college, their parents were unable to provide them with support. This finding is contrary to Lee and Green's (2008), Lor's (2008), and McNall et al.'s (1994) finding that parental support was high among Hmong American college students and served as a contributing factor to their academic success.

To compensate for the lack of parental support, the participants mentioned that they had to seek support from other resources. A common resource used by the participants was the Hmong Student Union, a Hmong club. The main purpose of the Hmong Student Union is to help Hmong students assimilate to the college lifestyle by providing study sessions, mentorship, and support to Hmong college students. It also

served as a connector between the participants to the Hmong community on the college campus and aided the participants in understanding their ethnic identity. In each of the participant's stories, they mentioned that by seeking support and guidance from the Hmong Student Union, they were able to make decisions pertaining to their college experiences and acquire some study skills. The participants also received mentorship and support from the club, making it easier for them to adapt to the culture of American colleges and universities. The stories shared by the research participants supported Kuh et al.'s (2008) and Ngo's (2015) suggestions that higher education institutions plan and implement diverse educational activities such as student clubs or organization for ethnic students.

As first-generation college students, the five research participants struggled to understand and adjust to their college life. Some of the challenges they faced included poor English language, unpreparedness for college, and a lack of parental support when it came to understanding the rigorous culture of American college. The experiences each participant shared pertaining to their struggle to adapt to American college culture supported Stephens et al.'s (2012) conclusion that the American college culture undermined the success of first-generation college students.

Result Two. Hmong American women in college struggle to balance their responsibilities associated with their roles as Hmong daughters and college students.

Hmong American women come from a unique culture that places a huge emphasis on filial piety, interdependence, gender roles, and social structures (Duffy et al., 2004; Lor, 2013; Moua, 2001; Riggs & Moua, 2015; Supple et al., 2010). Thus, the five research participants often face the challenge of balancing their roles and responsibilities.

All five research participants discussed their struggle with their gender role. As Hmong women, all five participants were raised and taught to be housewives; from a young age, all five participants learned how to cook, clean, and take care of their household and became an essential asset to their parents, which supports Lor's (2013) description of the roles of Hmong women. As college students, the five research participants ensured that they maintained good academic standing. Maintaining a good academic standing was challenging for the five participants because they were first-generation college students who lacked the family support to understand the culture of the American colleges and were unprepared for college. Thus, the five participants had to dedicate more time to study with a huge majority of that time learning how to study for each course.

As each participant entered college, they started to experience the pressure of fulfilling the responsibilities associated with their roles and responsibilities. For the participants who lived away from home, they shared that the struggle was not as intense. By living away from home, these participants were not directly responsible for managing the household and taking care of their siblings, allowing them to be more focused on their studies. However, they would occasionally receive requests from their parents to assist them in handling household responsibilities such as paying bills. To overcome this challenge, the participants learned how to prioritize their responsibilities. Prioritizing their responsibilities meant that each participant must make a decision between their family obligations and academic workload. Making this decision was difficult for each participant, especially when it meant refusing to help their parents, which was contrary to their culture's value on filial piety and interdependence (Duffy et al., 2004). To avoid the

situation of refusing their parents' cries for help, the participants learned to manage their time effectively by designating particular times or days to their responsibilities. The actions the participants took to overcome the challenge of balancing their responsibilities were similar to the actions taken by research participants in Yang and Morris's (2011) research study. Additionally, this finding is consistent with the findings made by Vue (2007) and Riggs and Moua (2005) in their research on Hmong American women in college and Hmong American women leaders.

Result Three. Hmong American women who graduated from college or university are less likely to identify themselves as Hmong women.

Research pertaining to students of color in college has indicated that as students of color enter college, they experience challenges associated with their ethnicity (Duffy & Klingaman, 2009; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Nguyen, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2014). In 1969, Chickering (1969) asserted that students in college are often confronted with the developmental task of defining who they are in college. Chickering (1969) also mentioned that students who identify within one or more ethnic groups face a greater complexity than those who only identify with one ethnic group. When asked if they faced any challenge associated with their ethnicity, the research participants stated they did not. However, they shared stories pertaining to their struggle to comprehend and develop their identity as Hmong American women.

Each participant shared that their understanding of their role as a Hmong woman comes from their parents and upbringing. Each participant was raised by their parents to become housewives. They were taught from a young age how to cook, clean, and care for others. Additionally, they were taught to be obedient and nice daughters who did not

question the decisions of the parents. The participants' description of the role of a Hmong daughter aligns with Lor's (2013) description of the role of Hmong women and daughters. Each participant mentioned that during their time in college, their perception of their roles as Hmong women started to alter, supporting Chickering's (1969) statement that ethnic students experience developmental tasks in college altering their ethnic identity.

Many of the participants shared that by living away from home and adapting to the college life, they started to question their roles as Hmong woman. By questioning their roles, many of them started to realize that there was more to being a Hmong woman than just being a housewife. As a result of this, many of them found it hard to return home to adapt to the traditional role of Hmong women. They also started to realize that they no longer identified themselves as Hmong woman and did not feel that they belonged to the Hmong community. The participants shared that they felt isolated because with a higher education, they had a different mindset and had a passion to achieve something greater than most of the Hmong women in the Hmong community. When asked if the participants identified themselves to be Hmong women or American women, the participants shared that they felt they were a little bit of both. The rationale behind this is that their perception of life and understanding of their capabilities as a Hmong woman who has graduated from college is beyond that of a Hmong woman, making them more of an American woman. However, they still embody the traditions and values of their culture, making them Hmong women, too.

A deeper investigation into the identity development of the five research participants revealed that the participants went through an identity development stage in

which they started to break away from childhood identity and started to formulate their own distinct identity. This finding is similar to the Identity Achievement status in Josselson's Theory of Identity Development for women (Evans et al., 2010). In summary the identity development of the five research participants were not so much aligned with Cokley (2007) definition of ethnic identity.

Summary

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the educational experiences of Hmong American women in colleges/universities and understand the challenges they faced and the approaches they took to overcome those challenges. This study focused on the shared stories of five Hmong American women who recently graduated from a college or university with a bachelor's degree in the greater Sacramento, California regions. The findings offered in this chapter emerged from triangulation and thematic analysis of four data sources described in Chapter 3: (a) semi-structure interviews, (b) observations during interviews, (c) artifacts, and (d) research participant journal entries. Through the data analysis process, four themes emerged and three results were identified. The findings and results of this chapter were used to inform the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the experiences of Hmong American women in colleges/universities to understand how their gender and cultural roles influenced their educational experiences. This study was guided by three research questions:

1. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their educational experiences in higher education?
2. What do the stories told by Hmong American women indicate about the challenges they face with their family and culture?
3. What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their identity as Hmong women?

Five Hmong American women who attended and graduated with a bachelor's degree from a college or university in the greater Sacramento, CA region participated in this narrative study. All five participants were first-generation college students and attended either the University of California, Davis or California State University, Sacramento. All five participated in one-on-one interviews and journal reflections. The stories collected from these five participants were analyzed using triangulation and thematic analysis. Through the data analysis process, three results emerged: (a) the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college are framed through the lens of being first-generation college students, (b) Hmong American women in college struggle to balance their responsibilities associated with their roles as Hmong daughters

and college students, and (c) Hmong American women who graduated from college or university are less likely to identify themselves as Hmong women.

The following conclusions from the study are offered in response to the stated research questions and from an interpretation of the findings and results presented, synthesizing the stories of the five research participants. This final chapter also proposes recommendations for administrators in public education and policymakers who can influence the outcome of Hmong American women in college/university.

Conclusions

In alignment with the narrative data in Chapter 4, the conclusions are presented as a response to the three guiding research questions.

Research Question One: What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their educational experiences in higher education?

The five participants shared stories regarding their educational experiences in higher education. In their stories, they mentioned they were first-generation college students who lacked the familial support with regard to understanding the rigors of college. Each participant mentioned that while in high school their parents were very supportive and expected them to go to college. But their parents were unable to support them while in college because their parents did not understand the culture of American colleges. As a result, the participants struggled to choose their major, pass the university's or college's writing exam, and maintain a good academic standing.

Choosing a major was a new concept for the five research participants. They were unaware of several majors available to them and how each major aligns to a career path. Thus, the participants chose majors in which they were interested or performed

well. The participants referred to these majors as “default majors.” Passing the university’s or college’s writing exam was a painful and tedious challenge for the participants. After taking the exam, the participants learned that their writing skills were not at the college level. They learned that they did not possess the skills and knowledge to write a paper with the proper sentence structure, punctuation, and verb tense, resulting in them taking writing courses and retaking the writing test. Maintaining a good academic standing was difficult for the participants because they did not have the skills to study for rigorous courses and were forced to learn and try a variety of study skills while studying their course materials.

The stories shared by the five research participants revealed that the experiences of Hmong American women in college or university are similar to the experience of first-generation college students as discussed by Atherton (2014) and Gibbons et al. (2016). Additionally, the stories revealed that Hmong American women face the same challenges that first-generation college students face when pursuing a bachelor’s degree. These challenges include choosing a major, maintaining a good academic standing, learning how to study and manage time, and adapting to the American college culture.

Research Question Two: What do the stories told by Hmong American women indicate about the challenges they face with their family and culture?

The stories shared by the participants pertaining to family and culture revealed that the Hmong American women struggle to balance their responsibilities as a Hmong daughter and a college student. In their stories, the participants mentioned that their parents taught them to cook, clean, and care for their siblings. They also indicated that they served as the second mother of the household and were responsible for paying bills

on behalf of their parents. The participants shared that when they went to college, their responsibilities were not eliminated; thus, they had to learn how to dedicate their time to both their family responsibilities and academic workload. This struggle was hard for the participants to overcome because they were raised and taught to not refuse to help their parents.

Another challenge associated with their family the participants faced is the challenge of navigating the American college system. In the stories the participants shared, they indicated they did not have a parent or sibling that has attended college. As a result, they did not know how to navigate their way through the American college system. The participants indicated that everything they did was conducted through trial and error.

In terms of cultural challenges, the stories shared by the participants highlighted the differences between the American college culture and Hmong culture. In the participants' stories, they mentioned that attending college meant having more independence and the authority to make their own decisions. Independence and decision making for the self are not present in the Hmong culture. The Hmong culture is a patriarchal culture where decisions are made by older men and carried out by the young men, women, and children. It is also a culture that operates on the concept of communism and interdependence where each individual has a role. The difference between the American college culture and Hmong culture is a challenge for the participants to overcome because they had to learn how to make decisions that would benefit them. Additionally, the participants also had to learn how to rely on themselves, which was challenging for them.

Research Question Three: What do the stories told by Hmong American women reveal about their identity as Hmong women?

The participants' stories pertaining to identity revealed that they identified themselves as Hmong American women. In their stories, the participants mentioned that their understanding of their role as a Hmong woman came from their parents and upbringing. Each participant was raised by their parents to become a housewife. They were taught from a young age how to cook, clean, and care for others. Additionally, they were taught to be obedient and nice daughters who did not question the decisions of the parents. But in college, the participants' perceptions of their roles as Hmong women changed. They started to question their roles as Hmong daughters and Hmong women and develop their own definition. After finishing their degree, the participants realized they had achieved something most Hmong woman had not, leading to their realization that they were no longer just Hmong women but Hmong American women, also. The participants explained that Hmong American women are different from Hmong women because they have a different mindset and a passion to achieve something greater. However, they still embody the tradition and values of their culture.

Recommendations**Recommendations for Educators, Leaders, Policymakers, and Institutions**

The following recommendations offer insights into enhancing the success of Hmong American women in college or university. Different institutions offer different levels of support to Hmong American students. At the University of California, Davis and California State University, Sacramento, there are significant resources to support Hmong American students. Some of these resources include the Hmong Student Union

and courses in Asian American or Ethnic Studies focusing on the Hmong culture and history. The participants of this study were able to provide insight into how these resources supported the needs of Hmong American women. The following are recommendations offered to strengthen and refine the resources offered by the university or colleges.

Provide a comprehensive support system. Because Hmong American women come from a culture different from the American culture, a comprehensive support system is needed to assimilate Hmong American women into the American college culture. Each educational institution should examine and identify the disconnect between the two cultures with regard to values and social structure and develop outreach services to bridge the gap. Institutions should also examine the disconnect between the English and Hmong language to provide better assistance to Hmong American women's language acquisition and writing skills. Career planning should also be included in the support system to address the challenges Hmong American women face in choosing a major and career paths.

Acknowledge the presence of Hmong American women on campus. Hmong American women are a unique group of individuals who have been reared to fulfill the roles of a housewife and their presence is acknowledged through the development of support communities. Communities of support should focus on providing support in addressing the challenges associated with their gender and cultural roles. They should also focus on strengthening the identity of Hmong American women as professional women through support or outreach program in terms of career planning.

Recommendations for the Hmong Community

A recommendation for the Hmong community is to acknowledge the changing roles of Hmong American women. As indicated by Lor (2003) the roles of a Hmong women in the United States as shifted from that of a housewife to a professional women and community leader. Thus, it is critical for the Hmong community to acknowledge the performance and achievement of their Hmong women and strengthen their support system for Hmong women. An example of the how the Hmong community can establish this support system is through the establishment of a non-profit organization that focus on providing mentorship, career planning, and college planning. Through the formation of an organization, the Hmong community can address the challenges faced by Hmong American women in college as well as providing mentorship among Hmong American women.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Given the increasing number of Hmong American women in higher education and the limited research on Hmong American students, further research may provide insight for administrators and policymakers to effectively serve the student population. The following are examples:

- A study to examine the identity and gender role of Hmong women of different age groups.
- A study to examine the educational challenges faced by first-generation, 1.5-generation, and second-generation Hmong American women in college.

- A study to understand the different challenges married and single Hmong American women face in college.
- A study to examine the challenges faced by Hmong American men in college.
- A study to explore the career outcome of Hmong American women of various educational levels.

Summary

This chapter provides a deeper understanding of the purpose and significance of this narrative study. In this chapter, the conclusions and recommendations emerged from the significant findings from the themes identified through the triangulation and thematic analysis of the stories shared by the five research participants. The key findings indicated that Hmong American women faced challenges similar to those faced by other first-generation college students and struggled to adapt to the American college culture due to a difference in gender role and cultural values. The findings also revealed that Hmong American women who graduated with a bachelor's degree are less likely to identify themselves as just Hmong women.

This narrative study increased the understanding of the experiences Hmong American women pursuing a post-secondary education. It also adds to the body of research that explores the needs of Hmong American students in post-secondary education and the body of research that explores the identity of Hmong American students. An understanding of this population of student will enable educators, leaders, policymakers, and institutions to effectively develop support systems that will meet the needs of Hmong American students and ethnic majority groups of students.

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16. Share a story of your worst experience and describe how you overcome this experience?
17. Reflecting back on your college experiences, what suggestions do you have to offer future Hmong female college students?

Ethnic Identity

18. What does it mean to be a Hmong woman in the Hmong culture?
19. As a Hmong American woman, what are your roles and responsibilities?
20. How has your college experience shaped your identity as a Hmong woman?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for the Second Interview

Meeting Date:

Time of the Interview:

Location:

Interviewer: Mai Chao Thao

Interviewee (Pseudonym):

Thank you for joining me again. In this interview, I would like you to share with me what you wrote in your journal.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflecting back on your college experiences, describe how your family supported your educational experience.
2. Reflecting back on your college experiences, how did your college experience influence you today?
3. Reflecting back on your college experiences, describe how your professors support or limited your educational experience
4. Reflecting back on your college experiences, describe your struggles with the English language.
5. Reflecting back on your college experiences, describe your struggle to pursue a post-secondary education.

Appendix C: E-mail Invitation

Dear _____,

My name is Mai Chao Thao. I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education at Drexel University Sacramento. I am contacting you as a potential participant in the research I am conducting. I am committed to developing a deeper understanding of the unique circumstances and experiences of Hmong American women pursuing a post-secondary degree.

The title of my study is “A Narrative Study on the Experiences of Hmong Female College Students.” The purpose of this narrative study is to give voice to Hmong female college students, offering an understanding of the challenges they face as a result of their gender, culture, ethnic, and socioeconomic status. The objective of this study is to support the efforts of Hmong female college to complete their post-secondary degree through an understanding of the challenges they face and the approaches they utilize to overcome those challenges.

To be eligible to participate in the study you need to be:

- 1) A Hmong American woman
- 2) Holding a post-secondary degree
- 3) Participating in a recorded 60-minute interview
- 4) Completed a journal reflection (comprised of 5 reflection questions) of your college experience.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I hope you will join the study. Please e-mail me to indicate your willingness to participate (maichao.thao@drexel.edu). When you indicate your interest in participating, a phone conversation will be held to discuss the study.

Sincerely,

Mai Chao Thao

Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership and Management

Drexel University, Sacramento

maichao.thao@drexel.edu

916-832-4936

Appendix D: Consent to Participate

Drexel University Consent to Take Part In a Research Study

1. Title of research study:

A Narrative Study on the Experiences of Hmong Female College Students

2. Researcher:

Jose Luis Chavez, Principal Investigator, Clinical Professor, Drexel University School of Education

Mai Chao Thao, Co-Investigator, Doctoral Candidate, Drexel University,

Sacramento Campus

3. Why you are being invited to take part in a research study

We invite you to take part in a research study because of your experiences as a

Hmong female college student.

4. What you should know about a research study

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part now and change your mind later.
- If you decide to not be a part of this research no one will hold it against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

5. Who can you talk to about this research study?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team: Mai Chao Thao at 916-832-4936 or maichao.thao@drexel.edu who is conducting the research. Additionally, you may contact Dr. Jose Luis Chavez who is supervising the study at 916-213-6954 or jlc334@drexel.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB reviews research projects so that steps are taken to protect the rights and welfare of humans subjects taking part in the research. You may talk to them at (215) 255-7857 or email HRPP@drexel.edu for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

6. Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore, through narrative inquiry, the educational experiences of Hmong American women in college/university, focusing on understanding the challenges they face and the approaches they use to overcome those challenges.

7. How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for up to two interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes each and a journal reflection over a two-week time period.

The first interview will be a semi-structure interview lasting approximately 60 minutes.

The second interview will build on the information shared in the first interview through the use of the journal reflection questions. Interviews are planned to be conducted between February 2016 and March 2016. The analysis of the data and subsequent research report will be presented as a Doctoral Dissertation that will be completed by June 2016.

8. How many people will be studied?

We expect about five to seven Hmong American women between the ages of 21 and 30, who has obtained a bachelor degree within Northern California.

9. What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- *You will receive an email describing the interview information, and a proposed time and date for the initial interview along with a request to provide a convenient phone number to finalize the interview schedule. You will also receive this "Consent to Take Part in a Research Study" document for your personal review. These emails will be followed by a call from Mai Chao Thao who will review the consent form and study with you. If you agree to participate, she will setup a date and time for the initial interview. The date, time, and place for the second interview will be decided at the end of the first interview.*

- ***Prior to the start of the interview, Mai Chao Thao, Doctoral Candidate at Drexel University School of Education will review the consent form with you and gain your written consent to participate in this process.***
- ***You will interact with Mai Chao Thao, Doctoral Candidate at Drexel University School of Education.***
- ***The interview will be at a location that is convenient to you.***
- ***The initial interview will be conducted sometime in February 2016 – March 2016. The second interview will be completed within two weeks of the first interview.***
- We expect that you will be in this research study for up to two interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes each and a research participant's journal reflection over a two-week time period. The first interview will be a semi-structure interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. The second interview will build on the information shared in the first interview through the use of the journal reflection questions. Interviews are planned to be conducted between February 2016 and March 2016. The analysis of the data and subsequent research report will be presented as a Doctoral Dissertation that will be completed by June 2016. Two digital recorders will be used to assure a verbatim record of the questions and responses. Observation notes will be taken during the interview.
- On all recording, and in any transcriptions, analysis documents, and the dissertation report itself, you and the educational institutions you attended will be identified by pseudonym to maintain your confidentiality.

10. What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, it is very important that you:

- Follow the investigator's or researcher's instructions.
- Tell the investigator or researcher right away if you have a complication or injury.

11. What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you.

12. What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

If you agree to take part in the research now, you can stop at any time it will not be held against you.

13. Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There is no inherent risk to participate in this research study including physical, psychological, privacy, legal, social or economic risk to the participants.

14. Do I have to pay for anything while I am on this study?

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

15. Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research.

16. What happens to the information we collect?

Efforts will be made to limit access to your personal information including research study records, treatment or therapy records to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization.

Following the completion of the study, the principal investigator will maintain in a locked cabinet in her office for a period of three years the following original records: Correspondence, research proposal, data collection instrument, data and results, audio tapes, protocols, Drexel IRB Submission, approved informed consent form, training certifications, and any other documents required by regulations. Following that, if there is no more use for it, the data collected for this study will be destroyed. If additionally publications are in process, that data will be maintained in the locked cabinet in the primary investigator's office.

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name, organization, and other identifying information confidential.

17. Can I be removed from the research without my OK?

No. The researcher does not anticipate any reason to terminate participate

18. What else do I need to know?

This research study is being done by Drexel University. There is no inherent risk to participate in this research study including physical, psychological, privacy, legal, social or economic risk to the participants.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER →

May 1, 2016

THIS DATE

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Mai Chao Thao

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Form Date

[Add the following block if a witness will observe the consent process. E.g., short form of consent documentation or illiterate subjects.]

My signature below documents that the information in the consent document and any other written information was accurately explained to, and apparently understood by, the subject, and that consent was freely given by the subject.

Signature of witness to consent process

Date

Printed name of person witnessing consent process