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## Hmong Americans in Higher Education: Exploring their Sense of Belongingness and the Concept of the American Dream.

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HMONG AMERICANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
EXPLORING THEIR SENSE OF BELONGINGNESS  
AND THE CONCEPT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the College of Education and Human Performance  
at the University of Central Florida  
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2015

Major Professor: Rosa Cintrón

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## ABSTRACT

I conducted this study to examine Hmong American college students' perspectives on sense of belongingness and their idea on the American Dream. The college experience can serve as a precursor to improving the social and economic situation of the Hmong students when aligned with the personal desire to gain upward mobility and motivation to circumvent social and academic inconsistencies.

The methodology of the study was designed for one-on-one phenomenological informal interviews with Hmong American college upper-classmen using a two-part interview protocol to elicit demographic and experiential information. Moustakas' approach to the analysis of data provided guidelines to review individual transcripts and to group, remove, cluster, and thematize lived experiences.

The findings of this study indicated that Hmong college students: (a) enrolled out of obedience to the parents, especially their fathers, regardless of the educational level of the parents and (b) thrived when authority figures on campus reached out to help their humble situation. . . it not only made them belong to the campus family but it strengthened their self-esteem.

Thanks to the Craig L. Daugherty Family  
Craig, Jared, Dana

God almighty has brought me,  
The love of family has supported me.  
The joy of friendship has uplifted me.  
And with the guidance given by Jesus Christ,  
I have arrived!

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*Plans fail without advice, but with many counselors they are confirmed (Proverbs 15:22)*

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*True friends accept us as we are  
while simultaneously cheering us along our road to improvement. . . .*

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## OPENING VIGNETTE

When I met Mindi Moua at the beginning of a semester, it was apparent that there would be potential issues that could prove problematic in classroom activities, especially because of his Hmong first name. Another concern was that though Mindi was diligent about getting English tutoring, meeting with me during my office hours, he always studied alone; and had Hmong conversation with his Hmong friends and family back home. I was shocked to see not only a lack of knowledge but also a lack of effort when he handed in a blank sheet of examination paper. Mindi was at risk to be asked to withdraw when I graded his examination due to his test results on the mid-term examination. Most of the errors were related to his lack of understanding English idioms. My concern deepened when Mindi stayed after class, again, staring out the window with a faraway look in his face.

Mindi exhibited an outgoing and friendly personality with me the first week of class, and I saw him turn to his Caucasian peers who acted as if they could not hear him or understand his accent. After that, he never spoke to or looked at the other students and me during the class. From 20 years of teaching undergraduate English courses, I knew Mindi would struggle to measure up to the demands of the courses due to lack of academic integration and no one with whom to share his feelings or the need for help. His situation mirrored that of the majority of students who were newcomers and non-native English speakers.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*Today, more than ever, education equals opportunity. In fact college-level learning is now seen as key--to individual prosperity, to economic security, and to the enduring strength of our democracy. We all feel the power of increased college attainment . . . so let's make it a priority. (Lumina Foundation, 2012)*

### Background

The face of United States is changing, both figuratively and literally. According to William Frey, internationally renowned Brookings demographer, data from the 2010a and 2012 U.S. Census Bureau projected the nation's shifting demographic profiles where Caucasians will move from a historical majority group to a minority segment of the U.S. population by 2050 (Frey, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b, 2013). This tectonic shift in demographics is taking place in a country that continues to grapple with racism and sexism, along with growing economic equality. For most citizens and residents of the United States, education has been the key to success in this country and for the global reputation of the U.S. as a leader in higher education in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines. Since declining numbers of the overall American population are less interested in educational attainment, focusing on increasing the number of college graduates remains at the center of US economic and social mobility (Matthews, 2012).

As stated by the Lumina Foundation (Matthews, 2012), the organization's Big Goal is "for the United States to reach a 60 percent higher education attainment rate by 2025, compared to the current rate of 38%" (p. 8). This would almost double the 38%



figure in 2013. In order to reach or exceed this attainment rate, at least 103 million U.S. citizens, ages 25 through 64 would need to complete the baccalaureate degree. A total of 10% of 36.2 million would need to complete degrees to add 3.6 million to the total number of baccalaureate degree recipients (Matthews, 2012, p. 8).

The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that 33% of Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian Americans over the age of 25 had less than a high school education; this rate compares poorly with the general U.S. population with an overall rate just over 14%. The failure of universities to increase the importance of normalizing the campus environment for at-risk students to achieve educational attainment will threaten the ever-declining reputation of U.S. higher education, while defeating Academia's goal to graduate more collegians and increase total institutional diversity. Specifically, in terms of education attainment, the 2010 U.S. Census revealed that more than one in three Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian Americans over 25 years of age had less than a high school education compared with about one in seven of the general U.S. population (*Asian Week*, 2012).

Another hindrance that has prevented Southeast Asian American college students from increasing retention and graduation rates in their ethnic subdivisions compared to their dominant culture counterparts has been their degree of poverty. When College faculty care enough to provide office appointments or after-class time in supplemental instruction without additional cost, it demonstrates pedagogical support for students with fewer resources to ease them into the campus and class. Of Americans overall, 11.3% were estimated to live in poverty compared to of Cambodian Americans who had a poverty rate of 18.2% and Hmong at 27.4%" (Pew Research *Asianweek*, 2012).

The history and culture of Hmong people is not common knowledge to most Americans, especially those who have been generationally removed from U.S. battles during the Vietnam War when Hmong refugees emigrated from Southeast Asia to the United States of America. During the 20 years leading up to the 2010 U.S. Census, there was a 112% increase in the Hmong American population. In fact, between the late 1970s and 2010, the U.S. Census reported the Hmong American population grew from 25,000 to 280,000. However, the 2010 Census also presented several risk factors for U.S. Hmong American college students. These included realizing (a) higher levels of educational attainment, (b) sufficient improvement in financial acquisition, and (c) continuous economic growth into the middle class. Hmong students also suffered from a lack of employment mobility that labels marginalized citizens as undesirables in joining the inner circles of mainstream student activities, culture and institutions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a).

The Hmong-Mien language speakers worldwide in 2013 were estimated at 10 million (Ratliff, 2013). The Hmong-Mien languages are a family of languages, independent from Chinese influences and spoken in southern China, northern Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand (Ratliff, 2013). Researchers Xiong & Lam (2013) reported several patterns of risk factors that they attributed to financial, academic, and cultural roadblocks faced by Hmong American college students who aspire to achieve educationally. Patterns for support systems emerging from their data analysis included faculty, family, financial aid, support programs, and, in some cases, classmate, academic support programs, cultural, and psychological support initiatives conveyed by “college counselors

and other professionals” (Xiong & Lam, 2013, p. 132). These risk factors reinforced biases in the dominant culture which created roadblocks in social and academic integration for Hmong American students (Xiong & Lam, 2013). In order to understand the Hmong American’s lived experience, it is necessary to examine sociological research on generational shifts in Hmong culture. Those considered as first generation are (a) recent immigrants arriving in a country as a child, (b) those arriving later as a teenager or young adult, and (c) the second generation children of parents born outside the U.S. Hmong Americans consistently reported lower levels of belonging and satisfaction as compared to their third or fourth generation peers who were nonimmigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Responses within the immigrant generation groups were similar. Portes and Rumbaut discussed the conflicts that immigrant populations experience. Conflicts included those within their community caused by changes in generational norms, beliefs, and values during the isolation, acculturation, and assimilation phases in their latest culture; the birth culture from the host culture; and the country of origin from the receiving country.

#### Statement of the Problem

Among U.S. marginalized ethnic groups, Hmong Americans have had the lowest retention and graduation rates since the 1980s, compared to “privileged” students from the larger Asian-American subdivisions, the Caucasian-American culture, and the more educated and wealthier immigrants. The first generation of Hmong American citizens realized that the United States viewed them as “second-class” citizens without a national

identity. This situation in the U.S. Higher Education system was compounded when students and faculty came to resent and alienate low-performing foreign students or first-generation college students who exhibited low college readiness, inferior college preparedness, and inadequate English fluency (McDermott, 2013).

If this trend in the declining number of college graduates in the general population continues, efforts to increase the U.S. middle class will be futile. However, by examining approaches to improve college enrollments, students-of-color will benefit from campus-wide intercultural training designed to promote cohesion in a diverse student body. Educational leadership and psychosocial student dynamics will influence, acknowledge, rectify, and motivate the current generation of Hmong American college students who seek educational attainment but struggle more than Caucasians and other Asian Americans to achieve it.

In this study, I explored how Hmong students make sense of the college experience with special focus on their opportunities and challenges with the concept of sense of belongingness (SB). I authenticated my research through interviews of Hmong American College junior and senior students were intended to shed light on how Southeast Asian-American students interpret, perceive, and internalize belongingness in American colleges and universities (Lee, 2006). Lee wrote that first generation Hmong American citizens realized that the United States viewed them as second-class citizens without a national identity. Another aspect of the problem just discussed was the need to reflect on who Hmong Americans hold responsible for having the lowest enrollment,

retention, and graduation rates of all U.S. minority groups (Donato, Menchaca, & Valencia, 1991).

### Significance of the Study

My study is significant because it addressed the paucity of research exploring the Sense of Belongingness in college students. In addition, this research will narrow the focus of the university sense of belongingness UNSB model (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007) to the unique characteristics of a political immigrant; part of a preliterate culture raised in a mountaineer-agrarian-only lifestyle of Hmong who received immediate citizenship upon entry into the U.S. Other ethnic groups entered the U.S. in one of three ways: as foreigners with the attention of marrying into citizenry or working to earn their citizenship; as slaves against their will, or as foreigners whose civilization owned the land of the Americas prior to the arrival of the dominant culture.

The UNSB model was used in this study to apply the Freeman et al. (2007) SB framework tenets to Hmong American College students by using in-depth dialogue to further probe previous empirical research findings on one of the newly disaggregated Asian-American subdivisions, the Hmong American. My research was conducted to explore the impressions that Hmong upperclassmen had about their sense of fitting into a course, with classmates, faculty, and as a part of the university during their first two years of college when they may have lacked college preparedness or language fluency. Aspects of students' fitting-in have been researched on students in K-12 grade-levels but not on Hmong college students (Goodenow, 1993). Data providing insight on a sample

of the total population may be able to be applied to the larger population. There has been limited research on the development and rigor of U.S. Hmong students' secondary school experience in developing their academic skills and preparing them for college. This study, however, pertained to the bias, stereotyping, and sense of inferiority that may impact the sense of belongingness (SB) of Hmong college students. In my interviews with Hmong students, I strove to reflect participants' candid feelings about the presence of belonging as they relate to the postsecondary experience (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). It is my hope that my research will serve as a contribution to the sparse literature on how a SB influences Hmong American college students' productivity, perseverance, and motivation to purposively achieve a baccalaureate degree, thereby gaining access to the American Dream.

The research was reliant, to some extent, on a segment of literature on Hmong lifestyle that is characteristic of familial and clan collectivism that is intrinsic to the Hmong Asian-American diaspora. Hmong American students benefit from a highly correlated dynamic of familial growth support and academic success (Yeh & Huang, 1996). They also receive a feeling of belongingness from joining campus groups that are highly sought after for membership. This appears to be critical in student persistence, increasing retention rates when there is recognition by a campus department, and contributing to the attainment of multiple goals. I posited that regardless of academic and social challenges, if Hmong American students had more cohesive relationships with faculty and administration, they would sense the support from non-student elements of the campus.

As a researcher, I gained a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between Hmong students, their Caucasian student peers, and administrators through phenomenological interviews with individual Hmong American students on the short-and long-term dilemmas purported by low graduation rates. Similarly, I explored Hmong American students' reactions as they strove for academic progress, deeper relationships, and self-efficacy.

### Theoretical Framework

The university sense of belongingness (UNSB) framework was advanced by the literature review of Freeman et al. (2007). The framework examines key factors associated with student motivations to succeed derived from feeling included and respected in the class by the professor, and as a member of the university environment. Overall when a student reciprocates the outreach from welcoming acceptance, respect, and inclusive campus behavior and social acceptance, students produce greater self-esteem and motivation that generates “positive outcomes in postsecondary experiences” (p. 203).

Freeman et al. (2007) developed a college adaptation of the SB construct that was based on earlier SB research on middle-school students (Goodenow, 1993; Osterman, 2000). Freeman et al. (2007) studied the SB construct in a certain college term course to determine if “adaptive motivational beliefs were associated” (p. 205) with that class pertaining to student perceptions of relevancy of tasks, “academic self-efficacy” (p. 205), and class participation. The significance of UNSB theory is grounded in the reality that

everyone wants to be treated fairly in the communities where they belong. This basic human need for social inclusion is especially true for marginalized, first-generation college students whose prior generations have been underexposed to educational attainment. Satisfying the need for belongingness will increase the marginalized college student's self-esteem if they sense social acceptance and respect from class, faculty, and university group interactions in campus academic and social activities (Maslow 1954; Strayhorn, 2012). The earlier theorists (Freeman et al., 2007) of the UNSB paradigm investigated "dimensions related to the student's involvement with class activities, instructional mastery, and receptivity to pedagogical support and warm reception" (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 207). The most noticeable observation was the student's sense of belongingness as a member of the campus community based on interactions from peer relationships, faculty instructional caring and respect, and university belongingness on the student's motivation that is demonstrated by university, faculty, and peer-level social acceptance and respect (p. 207).

#### *Tenets of the University Sense of Belongingness (UNSB) Framework*

There are four tenets derived from research findings about the UNSB framework based on the research of Freeman et al. (2007). What is unique about my model is that it introduced the concept of the American Dream. The tenets of the UNSB framework help researchers understand how to interpret the transitional experiences of college students who want to belong in a relationship with campus contacts. The UNSB tenets shed light on what empowers students academically and socially to join social, academic, and



campus activities after they received acceptance and respect from co-peers, faculty, and the institution. To elaborate, the research findings produced themes represented as aspects of the framework.

The first UNSB tenet, class belongingness, is characterized by student familiarity with “a regularly scheduled [class] for interactions with a predictable group of others” (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 206). The researchers investigated “the subjective sense of belongingness at two crossroads” (p. 205). One crossroad at the class-level was researched to determine if there were an association between a specific college course that explored “adaptive motivational beliefs” for the student in that same class (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 205). The researchers indicated that students had instructional affirmation and an important value and meaning when they were productive in the task-goal process. The researchers showed that when task and topic were relevant, the student’s intrinsic motivational levels increased in the task-goal process (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 205).

The second crossroad examined potential associations between the Sense of Belonging construct and a few motivational indicators such as self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and task value (Freeman et al., 2007). The researchers examined how students felt about belonging to a specific class and their ability to succeed in that class.

The second tenet is faculty/pedagogical caring. The research centered on student perceptions of instructor and pedagogical characteristics that enabled the student to academically succeed and experience a sense of class belonging. According to Freeman et al. (2007), “researchers suggest in social cognitive theories of adolescent development that students at every level of schooling benefit from supportive interactions with a non-

parental adult” other than a parents or grandparent (p. 206). Students experienced a Sense of Belongingness from warm interactions and instructional-caring from high-quality professors who taught effectively and displayed a mutual respect for students’ learning potential regardless of academic status in the course or such externalities as race, ethnicity, language, or any other demographic traits that generate a potential mentorship. The term, caring, was defined in the research by how the instructor communicated with the student caringly instead of punitively (p. 207). For example, when instructors were careful not to embarrass a student publicly, that level of sensitivity was noticed and appreciated by the student who had a new non-parental adult authority figure from whom to seek advice.

The topic of faculty pedagogical caring has been researched for several decades, and the teacher-student link has been declared as the epicenter to measure how much learning and human development occurs, especially for marginalized students facing untold episodes of rejection (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher-student relationship is a core element in the UNSB dynamic to produce warm feelings about focused learning and student response to instructional caring by a professor.

Researchers who examined the presence of cohesive student-teacher relationships observed increases in self-esteem and confidence to overcome minority marginalization and garner a sense of belongingness on campus (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In the first tenet, college students in a particular class feel supported and accepted when college students sense a professor cares enough to mentor and modify instruction to meet the felt needs in an academic profile of students-of-color. This trust placed in a non-parental

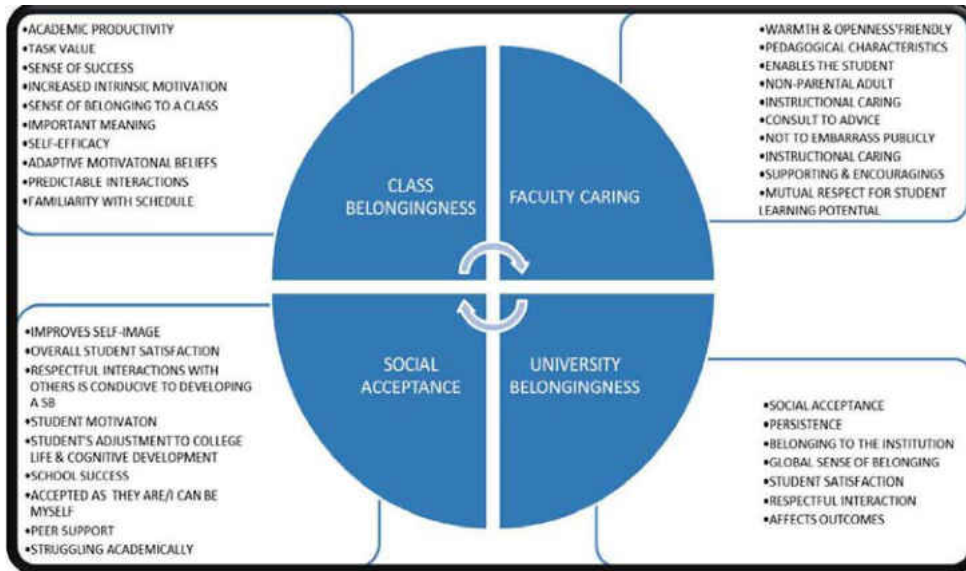
adult figure will guide students see that although inequities exist in a biased society total engagement with social interactions, taking initiative, and achieving average scholastic goals can redirect the student on the road towards university acceptance and respect. The second form of marginalization, which is a subtle form of stereotyping, originates in the myth of a “model minority” for misunderstanding the aggregation of Asian-American (Peterson, 1966). The majority of academics since the beginning of the twenty-first century, were unfamiliar with Hmong culture and had limited experience with the adaptation of the Hmong communities into the US. Therefore, that underexposure makes the majority of academics susceptible to a fallacious thought process of false assumptions and unrealistic academic expectations for U.S. Hmong students compared to the larger Asian subdivisions.

The third UNSB tenet is institutional university belongingness. The researchers found that for each student, the sense of belonging framework is an intrinsic experience that affects outcomes, persistence, and student satisfaction depending on how much social acceptance emanates from the university family. In the third tenet, students not only consider their academic productivity but whether they believe they are a significant part of what they consider the greatest sense of class belongingness, as a microcosm of the overall sense of university belongingness. The researchers also further explored the interrelationship between class belongingness and feelings of university belongingness, with respect to the depth of the faculty-student relationship and the overall campus sense of acceptance (Freeman et al., 2007)

The fourth tenet of UNSB is social acceptance at the university that is shown to the student out of mutual respect. The university will move closer to social integration of all population subdivisions if this tenet is internalized by the campus culture.

In Figure 1, the four rectangles attached to each sector list student perceptions of sensing belongingness within the class, in their relationship with the professor for the course, and the university administration's commitment to support the learning and social enrichment of its students. Finally, the overall sense of social acceptance and respect from peers, faculty, and the administrators increases the students' sense of school loyalty and pride within the halls of an inclusive campus environment.

Figure 1 maps the rotational dynamics of the UNSB framework (Freeman et al., 2007) and its four tenets with each of their respective traits. Students must identify the presence of belongingness, first by the class in which they have been enrolled for the term, followed by the sense of security felt towards a caring professor. With those two tenets established, students are motivated to get involved in university social and academic activities while building their self-confidence and self-esteem.



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Figure 1. The University Sense of Belongingness (UNSB) Framework

The components of the UNSB Framework are illustrated in two parts. The first part of the model consists of the four sectors of the circle that graphically display each of the four tenets. The tenets represent the four levels of social interaction that contribute to a student's sense of belongingness.

### *The American Dream Standard*

In this dissertation, I explored the American Dream in conjunction with the (UNSB) theoretical framework. My purpose was to learn more about the ideal's influence on the dynamic of the UNSB paradigm.

The American Dream is a standard of excellence and aspired happiness that students want and universities offer the professor who feels ordained to lead students to

educational attainment by applying the components of the UNSB Model. Several universities, e.g., Xavier University (2012), have conducted research to examine what constitutes the American Dream. According to Good's account (2010) of the Xavier University early monthly research of what constitutes the American Dream, there were eight identified benefits of having arrived at the entrance to that ideal. They were: (a) opportunity, (b) freedom, (c) family, (d) financial security, (e) happiness, (f) a good job, (g) home ownership, and (h) wealth. Some respondents cited responses in an "other" category, or indicated they did not know. The top three first-choice motivators cited were opportunity, freedom, and family. Figure 2 presents the American Dream ideal.

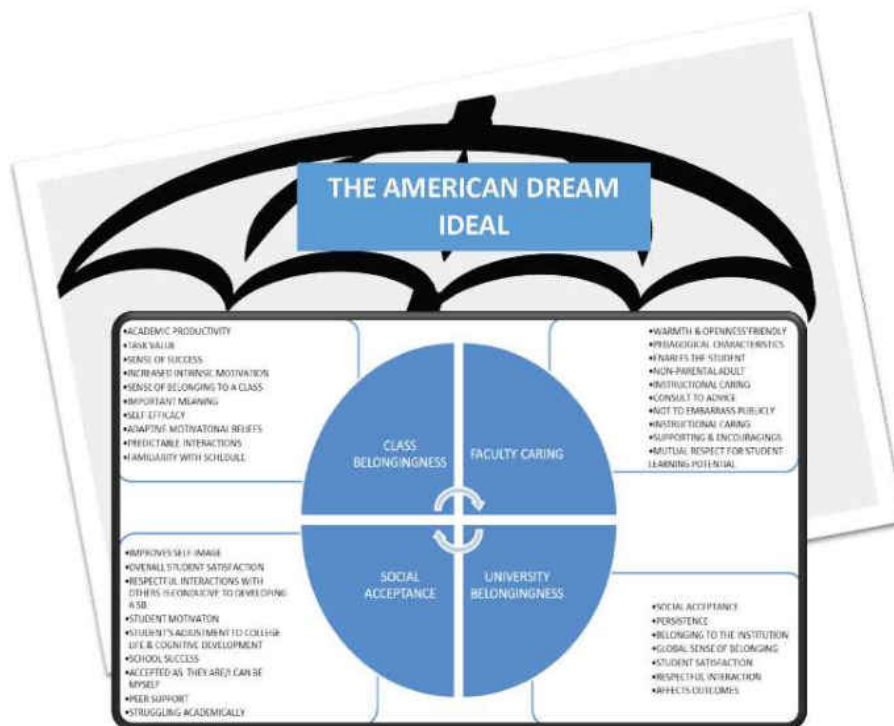
The American Dream is the destination and the UNSB framework is the road that guides the college student to the designation via social and academic interactions with peers with common aims to reach the ideal through the vehicle of postsecondary education. At the same time, the faculty member of a particular class will strive to require all of his or her students to comply with the American Dream standard, replete with skills, instruction, and competencies that show students how to obtain success and add to the UNSB framework and four tenets of the Freeman et al. (2007) Sense of Belongingness model. Figure 2 illustrates the American Dream ideal that is a matter-of-fact expectation by American-born citizens and expectation as a reward for hard work and education by the naturalized citizen.



*Note.* © (2014) Janet Fergus Daugherty

*Figure 2.* The American Dream Ideal

In this study, I investigated the UNSB model as a viable pathway to the American Dream and middle class. An interesting part of my study is that, as shown in Figure 3, it uses the sense of belongingness framework and applies the unique social and academic experiences of the immigrant Hmong American as a pathway to the all-encompassing illustration representing the American Dream. The added dimension of exploring a research focus on the lived experiences of Hmong American college upperclassmen, i.e., juniors and seniors, has never been studied from the Hmong perspective as to the American Dream and upward mobility.



Note. © (2014) Janet Fergus Daugherty

Figure 3. The Pathway to the American Dream Ideal

The Hmong were invited by the U.S. government to join the American population, but Hmong realized it would not be easy and that it would be one of the hardest migrations the Hmong community ever experienced. Therefore, in order not to appear manipulatively insincere, the U.S. government needs to ensure the Hmong receive life, liberty, and the pursuit of justice, along with their inalienable rights, specifically an education. That need for a college education and a stable career would change their cultural life in the US, but the new escape was from poverty and uneducated traditions instead of past escapes from harsh political conditions.



The lived-experiences of an unfamiliar Asian American subdivision culture is another variation on the college student and the Sense of Belonging paradigm. This study was intended to clarify the intentions and impressions of U.S. Hmong who want to reach educational attainment, without sacrificing their cultural heritage, in order to participate in the American Dream at an inclusive university. Based on the research of Freeman et al. (2007) and Strayhorn (2012) on the Sense of Belongingness, I explored how the research, adding an American Dream construct, was influenced by the UNSB model as a response to the research questions and in finding a pathway to opportunity, freedom, and the family (Good, 2010). My research focused on the *raison d'être* for the U.S. Hmong and to identify potential improvements in their life and need for a higher education to address their felt needs. The U.S. population belongs to a select group of citizens who are academically aware of approaches for receiving the benefits of the American Dream.

According to Gibbs (1995), belongingness improves student self-esteem indicators for college success with educational attainment. This, in turn, increases coping skills, motivation, and productivity levels. Improving self-esteem affects retention rates for minority students who struggle academically positively. For these reasons, I selected the UNSB framework to demonstrate how the framework influenced student motivation, school success, and overall student satisfaction (Freeman et al., 2007).

In particular, earlier research by Goodenow (1993) on Sense of Belongingness contains the framework's relationship to student learning and motivation. The following quotation describes the sense of belonging:

. . .A sense of belonging occurs when a student's sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others in the academic classroom and. . . feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25).

In this study, I reported on the way Hmong American College participants perceived postsecondary experiences. The narratives of college upperclassmen were analyzed with respect to the tenet characteristics of UNSB research theory, enabling me to determine whether upperclassmen valued lived experiences from their first two years in college, i.e., viewed it as a preparatory pathway. Whether university belongingness leads to empowerment that generates educational resiliency was also explored. Similarly, student perspectives were investigated as to the potential benefits of their baccalaureate journey for their opportunities for educational attainment, greater economic mobility, and professional social acceptance and belongingness in the workplace, leading them to the American Dream. If it is demonstrated that belongingness, social acceptance, and respect empowers, it is easier to understand the student's response to receiving disrespect, unacceptance, and isolation. One can understand the negative influence on student behaviors, effort, and empowerment that could occur. This could lead to academic disengagement and negative outcomes for Hmong American students at primarily white institutions (PWI) who wish to remain loyal to their cultural heritage.

Due to a lack of respect and social acceptance on campus, students often do not have a clear sense of class membership, faculty pedagogical-caring, or university belongingness, and they become discouraged enough to disengage from their purpose for seeking a higher education (Freeman et al., 2007). Hmong American students are not only faced with the wanting to belong on campus. They also face campus obstacles they

need to manage. When students do not have a sense of belongingness in their lives, they become disengaged and more vulnerable and can be drawn to joining the subculture of gangs (Burnett & Walz, 1994). When students feel they belong, their motivation increases, and they want to succeed in their course work. Belongingness usually results in an increase in engagement and participation in class tasks

### Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the study. They provided the framework for the interview protocol that was used to investigate the focus phenomena.

1. How do U.S. Hmong college students perceive and describe their lived experiences during their college career?
2. How do U.S. Hmong college students understand their sense of university belongingness?
3. How do U.S. Hmong students perceive how earning a baccalaureate degree prepares them to participate in the American Dream?

The first research question was used to investigate Hmong American college student impressions of challenges and opportunities encountered during their postsecondary experience. It provided primary data on emic impressions, reactions, and reflections of marginalized Hmong American college students, especially regarding the scarcity of a Hmong community or voice on college campuses or attainment in higher education.

The second research question continued to focus on social interactions in the college campus but from a present-day perspective. Hmong are treated in the microcosm of a college campus. It is a follow-up to the first question's probe on who the Hmong American is historically.

The third research question was used to examine whether a Hmong college student nearing graduation has perceived the benefits of earning the baccalaureate and yielded the fruits of a social and economic capital investment. Learning how to sustain interests in learning and motivation throughout the four-year process is a form of academic "boot camp" that leads toward the middle class life of respect and acceptance and success in the role of an American Dreamer, the next steps of career and family fulfillment of those dreams. The college experience included acquiring knowledge, building character, interests, and practical learning..

#### The Relationship of Research Questions to the Theoretical Framework

The intersectionality between the research questions and the tenets of the UNSB theoretical framework (Freeman et al., 2007) are presented in Table 1. The research was intended to utilize the UNSB framework, applying it to Hmong American college students and their contributions to the American Dream. An elaboration of the American Dream is presented in Chapter 2 from both an American-born perspective and a naturalized citizen's point of view.

Table 1

*Relationship of Research Questions, Constructs, and University Sense of Belongingness (UNSB) Tenets*

Research Questions	Constructs	UNSB Tenets
1. How do U.S. Hmong college students perceive and describe their lived experiences during their college career?	Phenomenological Interviews	Class Belongingness
2. How do U.S. Hmong college students understand their sense of university belongingness (UNSB)?	Sense of Belongingness	Faculty Openness Pedagogical Caring University Belongingness
3. How do U.S. Hmong college students perceive how earning a baccalaureate degree prepares them to participate in the American Dream?	American Dream	Social Acceptance Respect

Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted to explore the lived college experiences of Hmong students, their beliefs in how those experiences contribute to the attainment of a university degree, and their eventual achievement of the American Dream (Yang, 2003). One purpose of the study was to explore how Hmong American college upperclassmen make sense of their social acceptance on campus, faculty pedagogical caring and the American Dream. I also identified key themes that contribute to improved understanding of Hmong college students' academic and social experiences and how the construct of the American Dream influences them as they pursue college degrees.

### Transparency of the Researcher

*“How does it feel to be a problem?”* (W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903, p. 2)

My interest in Hmong cultural enlightenment was to improve my understanding of the distinct differences between the cultures of Southeast Asian natives and the Hmong born in the Southeast Asian host countries. My curiosity peaked when I realized Southeast Asian Hmong students were a potential ethnic group to teach in an Asian university. I wanted to clarify my understanding of the process encountered when Laotian or Thai hill tribes Hmong became cultural Hmong Americans. I was attracted to the handiwork and musical talents of the Hmong Karen people and was curious about their nomadic lifestyle and history of Asian xenophobia and entitlement attitudes of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and China dominant cultures towards the Hmong.

Another explanation for my research interest stems from my college double majors in social psychology and African American studies which focused on psycho-social behaviors of people of color in a predominantly white institution. Lastly, one of my professional training functions with Fortune 100 companies was training in intercultural expatriation workshops where I imparted cultural knowledge to U.S. management expatriates headed to three- to five-year job posts in overseas subsidiaries.

After a decade of teaching in American universities, my expatriation to Hong Kong permitted me to absorb the culture and to embark on an opportunity to teach and conduct research at Hong Kong University. My cultural capital was broadened through social and professional collaboration with sophisticated, educated, and dominant Han Chinese communities. As a first-generation American, I identified with the subtle micro

inequities of Hmong Americans due to native language and accent, lower economic status, along with the desire to achieve upward mobility in the US. The Hmong American is a relatively new “people of color” ethnicity that arrived 30 years ago in the United States (Vang, 2004).

After graduating with my Ph.D., I plan to return to Asia to resume teaching at an Asian university with possible enrollments of Hmong students. I want to teach business disciplines that enable mixed ethnicities to experience a sense of belonging, collaboration, and interdependence through social and academic integration.

#### Definition of Terms

The American myth -- often associated with the American Dream idea, but greatly influences mainstream society by promoting individualism and economic achievement as essential elements to achieve success (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012, p. 1; Sandage & Wyllie, 2005).

College Readiness -- extents to which students are prepared to successfully accomplish college level academic work.

College Upperclassmen -- juniors and senior college students who have declared a major in their pursuit of a baccalaureate degree.

Discrimination -- an unfair difference in behavior towards members of one group than towards members of the discriminating group (Weiten, Lloyd, Dunn, & Hammer, 2009, pp.182-183).

Diversity - refers, for purposes of this research, to diverse and unique social identities, whether defined by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, social class, language, citizenship, or other identity factors.

Educational attainment -- "the highest level of education completed in terms of the highest degree or the highest level of schooling completed" (U.S. Census Bureau (USCB), 2009).

Educational resilience -- having successful outcomes in school despite the adversities one has faced in life (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994).

The G8 -- a global forum for governments of eight of the 11 largest national economies. G8 can refer to the member states in aggregate or to the annual summit meeting of the G8 heads of government. G8 ministers also meet throughout the year, e.g., G8 foreign ministers, or G8 environment ministers.

Hermeneutics – the process of interpretation of experience and its meaning. The Hmong culture upholds a blended philosophy of success based on “a history of survival based on cooperative, group effort to preserve traditional values” through communality coupled with the unique American identity of individualism (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012, p. 5; Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Interdependence -- a relationship in which each member is mutually dependent on the others through respectfulness and accountability. A dependent relationship occurs when some members are dependent and some are not.

Lived Experience – Lived experience, as it is explored and understood in qualitative research, is a representation and understanding of a researcher or research



subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge. Lived experience speaks to the personal and unique perspective of researchers and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other roles and characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives (Boylorn, 2008)

Model Minority--a label applied by the majority culture group to minority groups who have higher test and grade scores than the dominant group or average population measurement.

Motivation--a strong desire to achieve, optimism even in the face of failure, and organizational commitment (Reilly & Karounos, 2009).

Multiculturalism--how individuals respond to diverse social identities. Multiculturalism and diversity are often used synonymously; but are distinguishable. "If diversity is an empirical condition, then the existence of multiple group identities in a society, then multiculturalism names a particular posture towards this reality" (Miksch, Bruch, Higbee, Jehangir, & Lundell, 2003, p. 6).

Neighborhoods--social communities with considerable face-to-face interaction among members (Mumford, 1954). "Researchers have not agreed on an exact definition" (Schuck & Rosenbuam, 2006, p. 258).

Perception—"the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment," (Schacter, Gilbert, & Wegner, 2011, p. 127).

Phenomenology—“In the context of social science methodology, the term usually means an approach that pays close attention to how the people being studied experience the world.” (Hammersley, 2004)

Prejudice-- “a [prejudging] negative attitude toward members of a group” (Weiten et al., 2009, p. 182).

Preliterate--refers to someone or a culture group that did not have a written alphabet or language but immigrates to a host country with a literate language, and cannot learn the new language unless they first learn the lexicon of their own language, for translation purposes.

Success--borrows its context from both U.S. and Hmong norms, customs, and values. In comparison, the Hmong’s view of success considers both cultures in the pursuit of “cooperative, group effort to preserve traditional values” (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012, p. 3) whereas the dominant American culture view of success considers “individualism and economic achievement” indicators (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012, p. 3)

Stereotypes--“widely held beliefs that people having certain characteristics because of their membership in a particular group” (Weiten et al., 2009, p. 178).

The social justice perspective--considers individuals and their environment by exploring the roles of power and privilege. In the educational arena, social justice education is committed to eliminating institutionalized inequities.

Self-awareness--having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives, as well as their effect on others, which includes self-

confidence, realistic self-assessment, and a self-deprecating sense of humor (Reilly & Karounos, 2009).

Social norms--“shared cultural expectations.” (Newman & O’Brien, 2013, p. 75)

Familiarity with these terms and definitions provided perspective and greater clarity of the problem, the relevant research literature, and the approach taken to collect primary data.

### Summary

Chapter 1 has presented an introduction to the proposed research. It contains the background on Hmong, i.e., Miao, American college students and their experiences with the sense of school belongingness framework. The problem of the study, the significance of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, transparency of the researcher, and relevant terminology were explained. Chapter 2 contains an extensive literature review about Hmong American students, the sense of belonging in college settings, and the impact on retention, generational differences, and socio-economic status-

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

*The American Dream will succeed or fail in the twenty-first century in direct proportion to our commitment to educate every person in the United States of America (Clinton, 1993).*

### Introduction

#### *The American Dream*

It is unclear why the Constitution of the United States does not guarantee the right to a public education to U.S. citizens, when “every country that outperforms the US has a constitutional statutory commitment to this right” (Lurie, 2013). Secondly, the increase in immigrant populations and in marginalized people enrolling in postsecondary school creates a dire need to improve national opportunities to raise the level of college graduates. This is especially common among the disenfranchised Southeast Asian, who lack support systems for financial aid, language fluency, and the threats against educational fulfillment. Living as a citizen in the United States should guarantee an education that qualifies graduates to overcome financial hardships and employment limitations. According to Hochschild (1995), former President Bill Clinton described the American Dream in terms of the tenets of success, using the following words of a 1993 speech to the Democratic Leadership Council.

The American dream that we were all raised on is a simple but powerful one: If you work hard and play by the rules, you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you. (Clinton, 1993, para. 6)

According to Hochschild (1995), Clinton’s reference to the American Dream conjures thought-provoking curiosities about the tenets of success. One deliberation is

found in the response to “Who may pursue the American dream?” (Hochschild, 1995, p. 18). A second probe debates “Of what does the American dream consist?” The third consideration is the reply to “How does one pursue the American dream?” Finally, an observation is revealed in reaction to “Why is the pursuit worthy of our deepest commitment?” (Hochschild, 1995, p. 18). The answers to these three-dimensional questions comprise the definition of the American Dream philosophy (Hochschild, 1995). When a U.S. citizen has transferred social and economic mobility to one’s progeny, others perceive that citizen as a success in attaining the American Dream (Hochschild, 1995).

The Center for the Study of the American Dream at Xavier University sponsors a monthly survey that reports findings from its Center in the form of the American Dream Composite Index (ADCI). The ADCI 2011 American Dream research focused on the origins of the ideology, the data analysis that defines the values of the American Dream as “a good life for my family,” “financial security,” “opportunity,” and “freedom.” (Hochschild, 1995, p. 18).

American Dream values have been tracked by the ADCI in five areas: economics, well-being, societal, diversity, and environmental. The informants used in the 2011 surveys come from all walks of life, but have not been categorically “limited to consumers, parents, children, students, employees, employers, parishioners, others, just to name a few” (Xavier University, ADCI, Section: About the ADCI, para. 1).

For those individuals who have been socialized in America, a scholarly dictionary provides an easily understood definition of the construct of the American Dream. For

others, the concept of the American Dream is difficult to grasp. According to the *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (2013), the American Dream entry is defined by Americans, who regard it as an “American social ideal that stresses egalitarianism and especially material prosperity. They consider it the prosperity or life that is the realization of this ideal” (p. 13).

However, for the non-English language American naturalized citizen, the concept of the American Dream is different. Southeast Asian cultures tend to be fatalistic, believing they do not have a say in the way their life progresses (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993). Americans, on the other hand, believe they are pragmatic and can maneuver the course of the future through risk, innovation, and visualizations that they can accomplish using new approaches.

Americans view the American Dream as “a happy way of living that is thought of by many as something that can be achieved by anyone in the US” (*Merriam-Webster* [Web], 2013). Especially by working hard and becoming successful with good jobs, a nice house, two children, and plenty of money, they believed they were living the American dream.

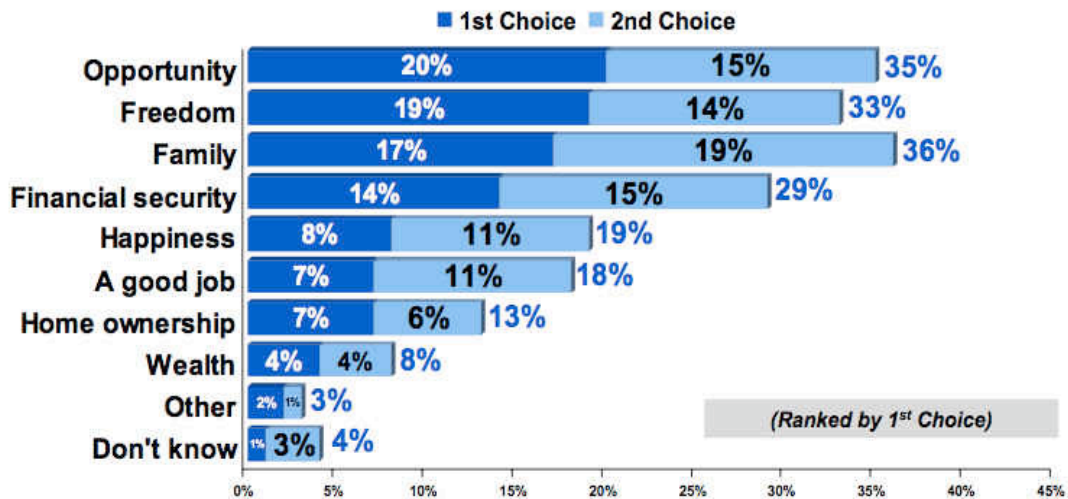
The construct of the American dream for the born and naturalized U.S. citizen contains the benefits of living the good life, but it differs by how each citizen group feels rewarded after earning that status versus entitlement due to birth.

Figure 4 depicts what constitutes the ideology of the American Dream based upon Americans perceptions of the first and second most important quality to the U.S. citizen. The figure indicates that of 10 options, Americans’ top first and second choice selection

was “opportunity” with a 20% first choice ranking for the meaning of American Dream. The U.S.-born population viewed opportunity as more important than having one’s freedom and family.

### Americans most commonly define the American Dream in terms of opportunity, freedom and family.

*When you think of the American Dream personally, which of the following words comes first to mind—not in terms of what anyone else believes the Dream is, but what you think it is?*



*Note:* Adapted from “A Majority of Americans View Immigration as an Important Part of Keeping American Dream Alive,” retrieved from <http://www.xavier.edu/american dream/programs/documents/Final-American-Dream-Survey-PowerPoint.pdf> Copyright 2010 by Xavier University, Center for the Study of the American Dream and reproduced with permission (Appendix A).

*Figure 4.* American's Perceptions of the American Dream

#### Introducing the Hmong College Student to American Education

My research questions led me to question if studying the history of Hmong Southeast Asians and their migratory survival from-poverty would explain the flight and plight of the Hmong in the United States (Newman & O’Brien, 2013, p. 75). I have

organized this chapter to improve the reader's understanding of how the Hmong American community compares with the dominant student culture and the rest of the Asian-American subdivisions. Hmong American cultural conflicts are similar to research conducted by Hurtado & Carter (1997) on Sense of Belongingness in marginalized students. However, it adds another dimension to understanding the social and academic dynamic affecting alienating impressions from the general university population applied to the general population (Freeman et al., 2007; Goodenow 1993; Osterman, 2000).

When students feel they belong, their motivation increases, and they want to succeed. This in turn improves engagement and interest in class tasks. Belongingness improves student self-esteem which, in turn, increases coping, motivation, and productivity levels (Gibbs, 1995). Increases in the indicators for college success are the result of increased retention rates for minority students who persevere and experience academic success. The methodology used to conduct this study permitted selected Hmong participants to share their perspectives. This was accomplished through focused interview responses on how sense of belongingness fueled interviewees' interest in class-level, pedagogical, and general university engagement activities.

### Differences between Hmong and Asian Ethnicities

#### *Hmong History Diaspora*

There have been speculations that prior to China, the origins of the Hmong were from Siberian mountainous regions. According to Chinese records, the Hmong people originated in the vicinity of China approximately 4,000 years ago. Ironically, the largest



Hmong population in the world live in China, the country the Hmong started their retreat from hegemonic rule. Many Hmong migrated southward into the highlands of what, at the time of the present study, were Laos, Thailand, and northern areas of Vietnam. They were seeking to escape Han Chinese rule (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012).

Appendix B contains a timeline tracing Hmong origins and history over three millennia (BC) and 10 centuries which enriched perspectives on the Hmong's journey through the ages of cultural development.

### *Laotian Hmong*

This section of the review provides background on the subdivisions of Hmong people and their migratory history throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These subdivisions can be explained, in part, by the clan name, e.g., hierarchical family structure that has historically grouped Southeast Asian Hmong by attire, practice of worship, and slight variations in dialect. Included is an extensive section describing Hmong clans and their influence on U.S. Hmong society. The transition of Southeast Asian Hmong to the US focused on Laotian Hmong who lost lives for the US and earned immediate naturalized citizenship upon entry provided by Congressional legislation is summarized in Appendix C.

When Laotian Hmong emigrated from China, the power base rested with the French colonists who also occupied Vietnam and Cambodia. Laos identified 46 minority groups that were non-Laotian. The first wave of Laotian Hmong refugees arrived from 1979 to 1985 and lived in clan enclaves in the urban society of Philadelphia (Street,

1993). Street reported that of “the 20 clans known as *xeem*,” (p. 274) each related to mythological ancestors, 11 clans resided in Philadelphia.

According to the U.S. Hmong Naturalization Act of 2000, when U.S. troops crossed paths during the Secret Wars at the end of the Vietnam War (Hmong Veteran’s Naturalization Act of 2000). In retrospect, some might consider the U.S. abandonment of Laotian Hmong who protected U.S. troops as they fled from Southeast Asia, to be a betrayal of expediency. Initial behavior shown by the CIA and U.S. troops towards the simple hill-tribes Hmong people was similar to stereotypical hegemonic orientalist views from the 18th and 19th century Western colonists. These colonists underestimated the intelligence of “uncivilized” colonized Hmong people who could be converted into political ammunition. They were useful to combat objectives in conquering French colonialism, rising Communism, and eventually U.S. humanitarianism.

The first Hmong military leadership was organized under General Van Pao. The leadership convinced the U.S. Government military that it was in everyone’s best interest to train Hmong men as pilots and in the use of ammunition to protect and overthrow a mutual enemy. The Hmong promised moral loyalty and became The Laotian Hmong, 300,000 of whom were eventually sacrificed (six times the U.S. death toll of troops) and left as political prisoners. This history is revisited in a later section of this chapter in order to better understand challenges faced by Hmong American college students.

Historically, the Southeastern Asian Hmong, also known as mountaineers with an agrarian livelihood, encountered marginalization in their Southeast Asian migratory host countries for thousands of years, starting in China. However, in the second half of the

20th century, the Hmong arrived in the Western Hemisphere countries of Canada, French Guyana, and as naturalized citizens in the US. The Hmong encountered a different set of new challenges in the US from their past experiences in Southeast Asia that stymied academic integration and understanding on how to solve cross-cultural first-time critical incidents. Providers of services to a growing Hmong presence also needed special knowledge of facts and trends that could effectively identify, address, and resolve the “felt-needs of Hmong Americans” (Yang, 2003, p. 11). This included knowledge about reports on national trends of Hmong Americans from 1990 to 2010 include: areas of demographics (Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, & Yang, 2012); socioeconomics (Vang, 2012); policy (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2013), and educational attainment (Xiong, 2013). Table 2 illustrates the dichotomy between Eastern and Western motivations that can cause a challenging transition for the Laotian-born Hmong to instantly become U.S. naturalized citizens.

Table 2

*Contrasting Societal Values of Eastern and Western Systems*

Eastern Agricultural System (Traditional Society Values)	Western Industrialized System (Modern Society Values)
Family/group-oriented	Individual-oriented
Extended family	Nuclear/blended family
Multiple parenting	Couple parenting
Primary relationship parent-child bond	Primary relationship—marital bond
Emphasis on interpersonal relationships	Emphasis on self-fulfillment and self-development
Status and relationships determined by age and role in family	Status achieved by individual's efforts
Well-defined family members' roles	Flexible family members' roles
Favoritism toward males	Increasing opportunities for females
Authoritarian orientation	Democratic orientation
Suppression of emotions	Expression of emotions
Fatalism/karma	Personal control over the environment
Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature
Cooperative orientation	Competition orientation
Spiritualism	Materialism/consumerism
Past, present, and future orientation	Present, future orientation

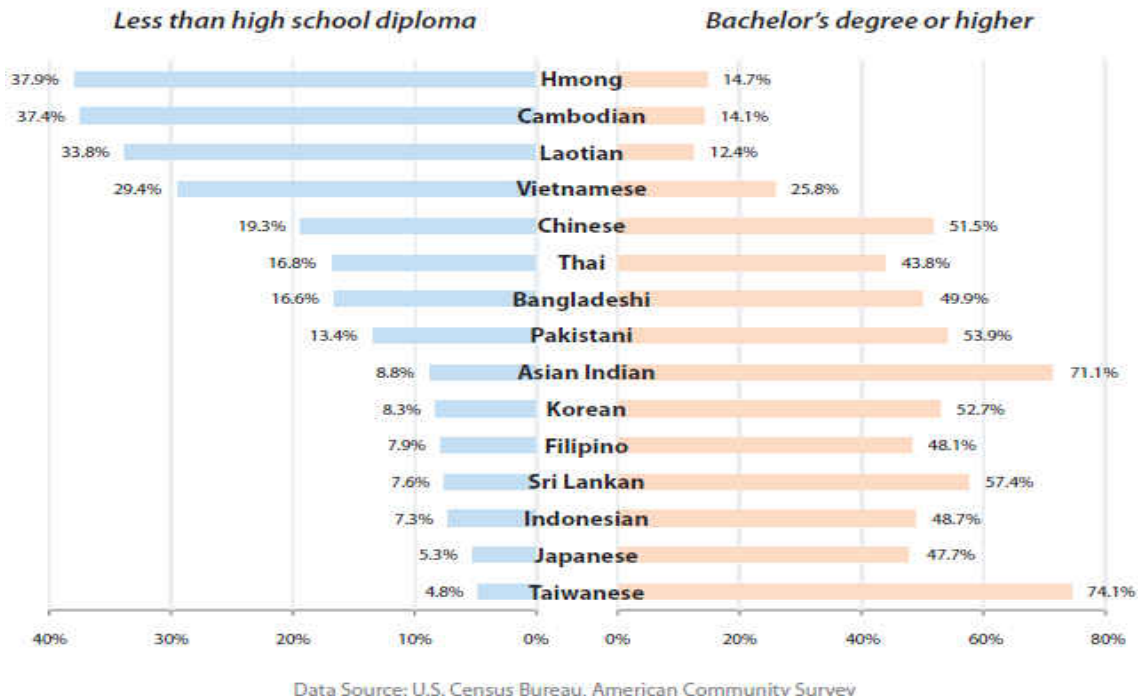
As Hmong Americans have evolved from generation to generation, their values, beliefs, and philosophy of life become less Eastern and more Western with an individualistic outlook. This means they become less connected with their family and less collective in decision making. In cultivating effective solutions to meet Hmong American needs, according to Goel (2003), there were three points to consider: (a) close the gaps on the absence of Hmong culture in multicultural diversity discussions, especially with Asian-American diversity; (b) “maintain and report the detailed information on the representation of Asian Americans in mathematics, specifically differentiating between principal Asian ethnic groups”; and (c) ensure college

preparedness and career development for the admittance and hiring process, (Goel, 2003, p. 879).

The urgency behind finding solutions to these issues stems from the stark contrast in data about the educational attainment of Hmong and other Asian American sub-groups between the years of 2008 and 2010. Figure 5 displays the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) analysis conducted by Teranishi. As shown in Figure 5, only 37.9% of Hmong Americans earned a high school diploma, and 14.7% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This represented the lowest level of educational accomplishment of all Asian-American subgroups. Park (2013), in writing about Teranishi's research and marginality, stated that:

Taiwanese and Asian Indian Americans report over 71% within each group with a bachelor's degree. About 12% of Laotian and 15% of Hmong Americans claim the same educational attainment. Asian Americans as a group appear to have a lot of education. The reality is that only certain groups are showing this level of attainment (Park, 2013, para. 2).

Disaggregating Asian Americans encouraged the larger U.S. culture to categorize population sub segments as different from themselves, thereby creating a simple way to stereotype individuals. The dominant population was predisposed to missing the "diverse realities of those needy Asian Americans" that required professorial caring in pedagogical instruction. . . ." (Park, 2013, para 4).



*Note.* CARE National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, (ETS) *iCount: A data quality movement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education* (2013, p. 8)

Figure 5. Educational Attainment for Asian-American Sub-groups: 2008-2010

### Demographics

The Hmong population increased by 40% in the US between 2000 and 2010 (Pfeifer et al., 2012). During that same time period, many Hmong moved to the southern states and Alaska, increasing their numbers by 134% in those two places (Pfeifer et al., 2012).

Another telling fact is that, compared to the general and larger subdivisions of Asian-Americans, the Hmong holds the largest number of youth in the U.S. at 44% (Pfeifer et al., 2012). The government and Hmong service providers need to promote the

Hmong culture in order to maintain its reputation for a high level of diversity and awareness (Pfeifer et al., 2012).

### *Age*

The 2000 U.S. Census data were aggregated for Asian-Americans, combining subdivisions of Asians to form one profile of academic excellence (Pfeifer et al., 2012). Further research on the accuracy and validity of Census data refuted accuracy in the original data, and the ACS organization produced its first set of disaggregated data in 2004, providing a more accurate account of Asian American subgroups. Key attributes for Asians were now distinguishable as seen in the following research results that describe Asian American culture, families, and traits of refugees and immigrants.

### *Religion*

The U.S. has had experience with providing cross-cultural training to immigrant workers to build and strengthen the economy and workplace relationships. During the first decades of the 20th century, the Ford Motor Company provided Americanization classes to immigrants to facilitate productivity and assimilation (Newman & O'Brien, 2013). When the first generation of Hmong arrived in the US, the government did not provide Americanization cultural classes to help with the assimilation process (Newman & O'Brien, 2013). Instead, the Hmong clung to their enclaves and religious shamanistic leadership (Newman & O'Brien, 2013). According to Lee (1997), the Hmong were predominantly animistic with influences from supernatural shamanism. Eliade, Trask, &

Doniger (1964) researched 2,500 years of Shamanism, observing the practices in the regions of Central and North Asia and the Polynesian islands. With her colleagues, Eliade defined Shamanism as a religious practice that is mysterious and fascinating phenomenon governed by the reaching of non-conscious ecstatic states by the shaman. During this state, the Shaman travels to the sky or the underworld and rescues the souls of the sick/ill etc. Shamanism is the description of the ritual ascents and descents. (Eliade et al., 1964, p. 6)

However, prior to U.S. arrival in the late 1970s, the Hmong were under the practice of communism which eliminated prior religious faiths. This resulted in many Hmong having no faith in anything spiritual. It is important to note that in many Asian countries under communist rule, religion was essentially abolished (Pew Research Center, 2013). Consequently, many immigrants from those countries may not practice any religion (Lee, 1997). Other religious influences in Southeast Asia due to colonization were Christianity and Islam (Roxborough, 2010). Specifically, there developed a large following of Catholic Filipinos as an outcome of Spanish influence (Catholic Educational Association of Legazpi, 2011). More than 70% of Korean Americans have been identified as Protestant Christians though some are Buddhists (Gaw, 1993). Japanese Americans followed Shintoism, Buddhism, especially the Zen sect, and Christianity. The Vietnamese practiced either Buddhism or, Catholicism from French colonial influences. The Cambodians and Laotian religions have been strongly influenced by the animism, Brahmanism of the Hindus as well as by Buddhism (Lee, 1997).



By 1970, special attention was focused for the first time on Southeast Asian Americans. This included the Hmong who showed, statistically, evidence of poorer college preparedness compared to the larger Asian American subdivisions of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos. These discrepancies in the U.S. Government's reporting and analysis of Asian Americans broke the fallacious mentality of believers in the "Model Minority" myth (Miller, 2010). The Hmong needed extra remediation, language training, and more support than the Southeast Asian Vietnamese and the larger Asian-American subdivisions that had excelled academically and economically.

### *Socioeconomics*

The Hmong American encountered new struggles of marginalization and lack of social and academic integration that resulted in feelings of worthlessness as part of an academic and social community. Hmong students sense defeat when, according to Tierney (1992), their "voice" does not matter to others on campus because they do not belong to a recognized student group in or out of the classroom. For Hmong American college students, obstacles to social interaction thwart any opportunities for sensing belongingness, mattering, or respect from the community, especially when treated as a "they" instead of a "we" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 27).

The Hmong American college student has encountered a socio-cultural dilemma characterized by barriers to bonding with a kinship of learners and academics "[to] creat[e] a sense of belonging and a common identity", or *gemeinschaft* (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 219). The German word, *gemeinschaft* has been defined as community

(Brubacher & Rudy, 1977). Sociologists use the term, *gemeinschaft*, to mean “relations are based on a relatively homogenous culture and tend to be intimate, informal, cooperative, and imbued with a sense of moral obligation to the group” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 219). These relationships are typical of hunter-gatherer, horticultural, and other relatively small preindustrial societies. Sergiovanni purported in his research that a community embodies “centers of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of *we* from a collection of *I* (p. 219).

The Hmong have often experienced a form of invisibility and isolationism from the general college community of faculty, students, and administrators due to a noticeable lack of language fluency, poor economic resources, and marginalization. These conditions have led to stereotyping by majority students and professors (Lindsey, 2013). Consequently, retention rates and levels of educational attainment have been low for the Hmong American college students (Paik & Walberg, 2007).

The dominant culture has often been accused of projecting myopic overgeneralized behaviors and attitudes towards ethnic segments of the U.S. population especially when the norms and values of those ethnic cultures apply when they use non-Hmong standards. Students and faculty in predominantly white institutions have often assumed that marginalized students lack college-preparatory skills, economic resources, and have poor language skills. Such assumptions have intimidated Hmong students and kept them from acquiring essential skills to attain social integration and experience academic success (Yeh, 2002). In essence, the felt needs of Hmong American students have frequently been thought to “fall through the cracks.” According to Yeh (2002), the

belief in the Model Minority Myth was based on aggregated data on Asian-Americans. The myth made it difficult for those [Asian-Americans] from disadvantaged backgrounds to advance their [academic integration], both educationally and economically, because neither their institution nor their own communities provided them with support or assistance” (p. 66).

The model minority myth is an example of a faulty etic approach whereby a researcher uses empirical methods to study a group of Asian American participants. In contrast, an emic approach, that utilizes interviews and other naturalistic methods, disaggregates Asian Americans and portrays their heterogeneity with greater accuracy.

The model minority myth reinforces the misconception of Asian Americans as a homogeneous, problem-free group, masking the considerable cultural and socioeconomic diversity within the Asian American community (Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013). There are 14 Asian ethnic groups that have a large presence in the United States: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Cambodian, Pakistani, Laotian, Hmong, Thai, Taiwanese, Indonesian, and Bangladeshi. These 14 Asian ethnic groups, listed in order of population size, had a total population in the U.S. exceeding 50,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). To reiterate, the ethnicities, because of their many differences, cannot be considered as one homogeneous, problem-free group.

Hmong life in the US started with an isolationist orientation that hindered direct access to the American Dream and upward mobility (Fadiman, 1997). Historically, the Hmong people wished to protect their freedom from outside (non-Hmong) domination. The Hmong, who were agrarian wage-earners, delegated labor intensive farm

responsibilities to able-bodied members of the family in exchange for the physical needs of family members. As a result, the Hmong sought social and economic independence from groups or governments. This explains why the Hmong, upon arrival in the US, chose to settle in Hmong communities away from the U.S. population's way of life and utilized the social services surrounding their neighborhoods. The first generation Hmong practiced their cultural heritage by retaining priorities for work, family, and not for education. Therefore, as future generations of Hmong started to want the benefits of having higher education, intergenerational disharmony emerged. Identity as Hmong in earlier U.S. Hmong generations meant that education must take a back seat to Hmong customs and traditions. This required that Hmong should not mix with Caucasians who have been hostile (Badillo, 2005; Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, Freiere-Bebeau, & Przymus, 2002). It meant that Hmong culture would not permit the abandonment of the native culture for the sake of acceptance into the dominant segment of U.S. society.

There are several underlying key conditions which have contributed to the removal of barriers preventing 100% social and academic integration for the Hmong. First, there is the continual practice of campus social invisibility by a non-Hmong Academy. Hmong doctorates become disinterested in joining an institution that sees Hmong faculty as invisible in the professoriate (Hune, 2011)).

A second factor that prevents the advancement of Hmong Americans occurs when university decision-makers ignore and minimize the need to raise the college's community awareness and cultural sensitivity to incidents of exclusion experienced by

this minority group. Such actions keep them from equally sharing a sense of belonging with the student majority in educational and cultural pursuits at a UNSB.

Third, the mental effort required to overcome muffled voices of Hmong students who want to be heard in campus community activities and programs stultifies and disempowers them due to a lack of preparedness for a successful college career (Strayhorn, 2012). These three points are considered hindrances to Hmong students' educational attainment.

Although this final factor is external to the Hmong American college student experience, the problem of underrepresentation of Hmong Americans in higher education also extends to the professoriate. Research has shown that Hmong doctorates become disinterested in joining an institution that sees Hmong faculty as invisible in the professoriate (Hune, 2011), and a primarily white institution would most likely highlight its diversity in the aggregated professoriate without specific reference to the Hmong Asian-American subdivision. An etic study that fails to use Hmong informants in the interview would not do justice to giving a holistic point of view of the Hmong higher education-experience. Therefore, the fieldwork in my study took the informant's emic or insider's view of the Hmong American condition.

Ultimately, invisibility exists with Hmong American students by the actions of professors and classmates who circumvent eye-contact and ignore students' needs for further instruction, thus ignoring the unleashed intellectual potential of Hmong. There is a need to identify when the Hmong community is prone to feelings of social rejection which position them outside the realm of school belonging, and, in turn lead to a lack of

motivation, sustainability, and focus in achieving student success. In the case of Hmong students who have begun their college experience with an optimistic, positive attitude, negative campus interactions can lead to a sense of failure and isolation which demotivates and results in retention complications (Yang, 2003).

Another influence on school track placements is the evaluation of students' caliber of English-language capability. Minorities, who are non-native English speakers, though talented and capable, are frequently placed on remedial or vocational tracks without determining their potential. Southeast Asian newcomers, such as the minority of U.S. Hmong who are capable and proficient in English, should be able to avoid academic tracking limitations (Borden, 2005; Zehr, 2002). Researchers have indicated that with English fluency and cohesive family advocacy, Hmong Americans have the ability to overcome threats against integration into the campus community. Gaining support from administrators and faculty is essential to garner targeted resources and develop innovative programs that facilitate the integration of Hmong into the campus life of a predominantly white institution. Only then will retention rates have a chance to reflect improvements and support.

Regardless of stereotyping and model minority myths, the facts indicate a shortage of conferred college degrees among Hmong Americans. This requires scrutiny of tracking methods by college administrators to correct perceived academic marginalization among Asian Americans where it may exist (Villardón-Gallego, Yániz, Achurra, Iraurgi, & Aguilar, 2013).

### History of Educational Attainment for Hmong Americans

Educational attainment was not a priority for average Hmong who lived in Southeast Asia before their arrival to the United States. As farmers, the Hmong focused on yielding crops to earn economic stability for their families, although that trade prevented them from reaching a middle-class lifestyle (Corlett, Dean, & Grivetti, 2003). Once the Hmong arrived in the US and attained naturalized citizenship and veteran status, Hmong women in the first generation aspired to obtain the baccalaureate degree to improve personal and communal economic status for their community.

As has been mentioned previously, several social and academic factors that have prevented Hmong Americans from expressing interest and zeal to attend college are family conflict over the short term versus long term vision to earn wages in providing for daily needs. Due to language fluency and harassment, Hmong students have not been inclined to subject themselves to humiliation, especially when they do not sense belongingness from their peer group, set of faculty, or the university's lack of awareness of Hmong cultural heritage. The studies previously discussed indicated a lack of financial, language, or transitional support from secondary schools, especially when Hmong were complacent about receiving high school diplomas. By limiting their education, they have limited their chances for social acceptance, improved economics, and upward mobility.

What is needed is encouragement from different areas within postsecondary education. This entails developing mentor relationships with major faculty and administrators. It also calls for social acceptance and respect when learning and speaking

English with university initiatives to improve what the Hmong consider weaknesses in their ability to reach educational attainment.

### Hmong American Goals

The primary goal of Southeastern Hmong, prior to their arrival in the US was to raise enough crops to provide for their large families and maintain their land and homes. Hmong women focused on earning wages for their family through their handiwork with tapestry and embroidery to escape antiquated, superstitious, and misogynistic norms and behavior (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012). Their focus was on their labor and not on education or literacy. Nonetheless, the Hmong were self-sufficient, maintaining a simple agrarian lifestyle without the need for literacy or social status. Hmong Americans have suffered from a history of gang violence, especially in their first generation interactions stemming from post-war torture in Southeast Asia, post-traumatic stress experiences in Laos, and socio-cultural conflicts in a new country (Burnett & Walz, 1994). When exemplary academic results are expected from all Asians without disaggregating the needs of each Asian-American subdivision for support structures, the results can be calamitous, leading to the development of fallacious attitudes that are deeply embedded in the U.S. population (Museus et al., 2013).



### The Idea of Success

“To have deep roots and to be stable means to be successful.” (Proverbs 12:3, New Living Translation)

The first two generations of U.S. Hmong were still attached to their Southeast Asian roots. They, however, gradually moved from the tendency to cling to Hmongness to an attitude of relinquishing the simple life for economic and educational improvements gained in U.S. assimilation.

### The Hmong American Diaspora

#### *The History of Hmong Identity*

The Hmong population is one of 48 communities inside the Asian American diaspora, and each community possesses its own unique characteristics (Lee, 1997). The Hmong ethnicity originated near China, spread throughout Southeast Asian countries, and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century moved the male-dominated patriarchal culture to the United States. As Hmong culture arrived in America, family names identified the roots based on one of 18 family-named, tightly-knit clans that originated in East and Southeast Asia. Hmong lineage is based on a cultural identity system of the clan structure.

Hmong are distinguishable by their surname which has become the nickname for their clan name. The Hmong American diaspora descended from a known 19 clans (Yang, 2003). For example, the clan name, i.e., Moua, is shared with other Moua around the world. However, the Moua clan forms a patrilineal lineage when the smaller segment

of Moua can find common great-great-grandparents. Therefore, each clan can be subdivided into multiple linages (Cha, Vue & Carmen, 2004).

Members of a clan who shared the same ritual practices may identify as a group on the sub-clan level. Prior researchers have reported different sources for learning about Hmong clans. Figure 6 displays more recent Hmong clan names, 11 of which settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Street, 1993).

As communists moved into Vietnam and Laos, it caused fluctuations in the power-base between Laotian communists and the French colonists which eventually expunged the French from Southeast Asia (Yang, 2012, pp. 14-15). The U.S. CIA trained Laotian Hmong to defend U.S. troops in Vietnam War activities that led to escape of U.S. troops at the expense of Laotian Hmong annihilation (Yang, 2012, pp. 14-15). The remaining CIA led Laotian Hmong to Thai refugee camps and the eventual departure of Hmong from Southeast Asia to the Western countries of the US, France, Australia, French Guyana, and Canada (Lee, 1997). Needless to say, the Hmong, whose name means “free people,” never had a country to call their own (Yang, 2012, p. 5). Their beginnings were often repeated in their plights of domination and flights to freedom.

FIGURE 1. Surnames<sup>1</sup>

<b>Yang</b>	may become Yaw <sup>6</sup> ; both divisions divided into nyong <sup>5</sup> /Sua, and pa <sup>6</sup> /pang <sup>5</sup>
<b>Vang</b>	becomes Vu <sup>5/4</sup> ; White Hmong divided into tshua <sup>3</sup> -mal <sup>2</sup> and ntxhong <sup>4</sup> as either Hmong or Sua
<b>Vw<sup>2</sup></b>	only White Hmong
<b>Xyong</b>	become Mo <sup>1</sup> , White Hmong divided into Sua and Hmong
<b>Lau<sup>2</sup></b>	according to Mottin equivalent to Green Hmong Kw <sup>3</sup> /Nkw <sup>4</sup>
<b>Li<sup>4</sup></b>	become Cai <sup>5</sup> , both White Hmong and Green Hmong divided into Sua and Hmong
<b>Haw<sup>2</sup></b>	become Dlua <sup>6</sup>
<b>Mua<sup>4</sup></b>	become Zang
<b>Hang</b>	become Tang, listed as a separate surname by BERTRAIS (1964)
<b>Kw<sup>3</sup></b>	become Nkw <sup>4</sup> , but Mottin gives both as Green Hmong equivalents to White Hmong Lau <sup>2</sup>
<b>Khang</b>	becomes Plua <sup>5</sup> ; Plua <sup>5</sup> listed as a separate surname by BERTRAIS (1964)
<b>Fa<sup>2</sup></b>	only White Hmong
<b>Tsang</b>	become Tsang
<b>Tho<sup>2</sup></b>	becomes Dlu <sup>1</sup>
<b>Kong</b>	like the Tsang also become Tsang, according to Mottin
<b>Tshee<sup>2</sup></b>	White Hmong only
<b>Xong<sup>7</sup></b>	only Green Hmong
<b>Xe<sup>7</sup></b>	only White Hmong
<b>Tso<sup>7</sup></b>	like Khang also becomes Plua <sup>5</sup> , according to Mottin
<b>Cho<sup>2</sup></b>	only White Hmong

NOTES

1. I ignore reports of Tong, Chue, Pha and Yoj.
2. This term, *ma*, is pronounced *mang* in Green Hmong, and is the same term as that used for the Yi people.

FIGURE 2. Cultural Divisions

Chinese	ethnic	classifications	black		green	white	red	flowery
Hmong	ethnic	distinctions		hmong/sua				
Hmong	cultural	divisions	black		sua	green	white	
Hmong		surnames	black					
Hmong		sub-surnames		hmong/sua				

*Note.* Reproduced with permission from Cultural Accommodations in Southwest China: The “Han Miao” and Problems in the Ethnography of the Hmong,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 6(11), 2002. Copyright 2002 by *Asian Folklore Studies*.

Figure 6. Hmong Clan Names

Whenever there was emigration, migration, or immigration, the Hmong were usually treated as uncivilized, preliterate, poor agrarian hill tribes people, who self-imposed isolationist tendencies toward the mainstream culture of residence. Over several millennia, the dominant culture of residence did not integrate the Hmong into the host country which placed the Hmong into a subordinate class of poverty. That sense of isolationism was entrenched in Hmong historical practices and transferred to the US with Hmong migration, citizenship, and settlement into urban west, mid-and southeastern states in America.

Unfortunately, the present generation of Hmong Americans tended to stray from family oral traditions and history of life prior to their U.S. arrival. This clouded their sense of identity and pride in their contributions in various ways, leaving them unrewarded and disoriented (Klinge & Macias-Gonzalez, 2012). As a thriving population, the Hmong experience differs by generational cohort in realizing their contributions to American societal enhancements. A list of Hmong American contributions that continue to enhance U.S. society can be viewed in Appendix D. Each Hmong tirelessly works/ed to smooth the “road to success” for the Hmong American community politically, professionally, socially, or civically.

## Hmong Americans: Implications for College Student Retention

### *The Hmong Population in the US*

In the years between 2000 and 2010, the Hmong population in the US had a 40% increase. During that same time period, Hmong Americans moved to the Southern states and Alaska, increasing their numbers by 134%. Another telling fact is that at the time of this study, the Hmong had the largest percentage with 44% of youth in the US compared to the general and larger subdivisions of Asian-Americans.

### *Generational Differences: Isolationism, Acculturation, Assimilation*

Although the masses of Hmong American appear voiceless in a predominantly U.S. Caucasian milieu, there are a few influential Hmong elder statesmen, whose voice of advocacy has been heard and followed successfully. At the time of the present study, one international authority on diversity, serving as ombudsman within the College Asian American community, was the *Director of the Asian American Resource Center (AARC)* and member of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). Associate Dean Sefa Aina of Pomona College has debated the importance of cross-cultural and intercultural exchange. Intercultural communication and interaction, according to Aina (2012), enriches student intellect as they explore deeper issues of diversity.

Aina (2012) reported that over 38% of Hmong Americans have not attained a high school diploma. Since 1977, the Hmong American presence in the US has gradually

changed the values, norms, and belief systems of Hmong American communities. The first generation of Hmong escaped from Laotian terror after the Vietnam War in the late 70s. Many second generation Hmong Americans had language problems and were without informal or formal education; however, there was an increase in college enrollment by the initial generation of Hmong college women followed by the presence of Hmong male students who were second generation.

To clarify, the sociologically categorization of the 1.5 generation (1.5G) refers to people who immigrate to a new country before or during their early teens. They earn the label of the 1.5 generation because they bring with them characteristics from their home country but continue their assimilation and socialization in the new country, thus being halfway between the first and second generation (Crawford Family Forum, 2013; Rojas, 2012). Their identity is, thus, a combination of new and old culture and traditions. Rumbaut (2008), a sociologist, was among the first to use the 1.5G term to examine outcomes among those arriving in the United States before adolescence.

Second generation (2G) consists of U.S.-born children with at least one foreign-born parent. The 2G Hmong students have experienced the greatest turmoil in deciding to walk away from Hmong culture and 1G relatives to assimilate into the larger U.S. student body on a college campus. Some researchers have begun to question whether those with one native-born parent and those with no native-born parents should be considered as one group. There has been some evidence suggesting that there are significant differences in outcomes between the two groups.

The term, third generation (3G), refers to U.S. Hmong who assimilated relationally with the social majority in-group population while remaining connected with their families. Third generation (immigrant) has been defined as U.S.-born children of two U.S.-born parents, where at least one grandparent is foreign-born. 3G Hmong students enrolled in junior and senior college groups have been uninterested in relinquishing their cultural heritage. Unlike the first two generations, 3G Hmong students have found memberships with in-group associations and have gained a high level of sense of belongingness (Banks, 2012).

#### Research Limitations

I am a mature, highly educated person-of-color with a different ethnicity than my potential participants. The term, person-of-color, is what may be considered my biggest limitation, more than race, gender, or age. The majority of Asian cultures have a disdain for dark-skinned people or those who are darker than their complexion. My American and global socialization has reared minorities who commit cultural suicide to the extent that fitting-in with the majority means exhibiting intra-racial prejudice; that is a common trait to African American culture and darker-complected cultures worldwide. Fortunately, my college major in African American studies as well as my identity with a marginalized group, may put me on equal footing with Hmong Americans in my social efforts to build relationships with interviewees.

What I do have in common with interested parties is the desire to participate in the American Dream when given the opportunity to exist beyond my comfort zone. I do

not speak Hmong, but I have the unique advantage of understanding the cultural attributes of East and Southeast Asia and have lived in and appreciate Asian cultures, especially cultures considered minorities or marginalized. As a well-traveled intellectual and a first-generation American (as some would call me), I empathize with what it feels like to be in the presence of no sense of belongingness. This enables me to open up and be transparent with strangers I want to learn more about.

This brings into question any risk associated with my positionality when interviewing Hmong Americans. In this manuscript, risks of the researcher are discussed as part of the research limitations stated in Chapter 3.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature related to the topics of interest in this study as identified in the three guiding research questions. The American Dream, using attributes of the ideal derived from monthly Xavier University (2013) research, was explained. Also included was a discussion and figure illustrating the juxtaposition between the theoretical framework of university sense of belongingness positioned as a pathway to the American Dream ideal and its properties. Differences between U.S. Hmong and Asian-Americans were explored. The university sense of belongingness framework was included on the basis of age, religion, and socioeconomic demographics.

The history of educational attainment for Hmong Americans was reviewed, and the American Dream philosophy and the differences in meaning for U.S.-born citizens and naturalized citizens was discussed. This chapter also addressed the history of the



Hmong identity and diaspora including generational differences that often affect minorities and particularly the Hmong. Finally research limitations were presented.

Chapter 3 explains the methods and procedures used to conduct this research. The qualitative phenomenological research design permitted me to examine outcomes and effects on the Hmong informant responses to life history, resettlement adjustments, self-identification, and personal aspirations as U.S. citizens.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

### Prologue

This chapter details the methods and procedures used to explore the sense of belongingness in Hmong American college students and whether campus directives impact successful educational attainment for Hmong students as seen from the eyes of juniors and seniors (upperclassmen). The research design and rationale are described in detail. The selection of site and participants is fully explained. The research questions are clearly linked to each of the demographic and interview protocols by theoretical framework categories. Also included in this chapter are the data collection and analysis methods used to gather the responses to the protocol. Other important components of the research, i.e. researcher bias, ethical factors, intentionality, and positionality are also discussed.

Qualitative phenomenological interviews complemented the focus of the study's cultural academic phenomena. Moustakas (1994) purported that of all the qualitative methods delineated in the tome of human science research, phenomenological methods are needed to conduct efficient data collection, taking timeframes, structured interviews, and verbal/written methods into consideration. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study of Hmong American college students' perceptions of their social and academic interactions prior to declaring an academic concentration.

Another purpose of phenomenological interviews was to determine if participants believed their sense of belongingness influenced their sense of self-esteem, self-

empowerment, changes in productivity levels, or academic resiliency. In addition, through this method I was able to determine if signs of disempowerment and disengagement were below par due to issues of social identity for Hmong American students at predominantly white institutions. Another purpose in each interview session was to determine if the students' sense of belongingness as Hmong Americans had an influence on them in remaining loyal to their cultural heritage

### Research Design of the Methodology

The research design used in this study required the use of 90-minute in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions. The purpose of the interviews was to capture a view from inside the Hmong perspectives on struggles and strategies that made a difference in Hmong students' plans to succeed in achieving their goals despite the challenges presented to them (Crotty, 1998; Hermanowicz, 2003). I created the protocol items through research on the theoretical framework and in my literature review of qualitative research studies. Moreover, using the guidelines advocated in Strayhorn's (2012) research, I identified which levels of social and academic interactions on campus were responsible for creating students' sense of belongingness on a campus. The interviews contained questions with informant responses about college-life history, resettlement adjustments, self-identification, and academic aspirations as U.S. citizens.

Although each participant in a qualitative interview is as unique as the next, collecting descriptive demographic data helps to find a common thread that equalizes common attributes of all the participants, i.e., ethnicity, language, generation, and

geographic location. In order to manage time constraints, a brief online demographic survey of 16 questions was administered to participants and is displayed in Appendix E.

## Research Design and Rationale

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to elicit informants' responses in order to investigate a set of themes were used in the study. This face-to-face method was used to intentionally capture "the descriptions of the interviewee's life world" (Patton, 1990, p. 6), especially non-verbal cues and expressions. I prepared an interview protocol (Appendix E) to help me maintain focus on a set of casual, but well thought-out questions in a prescribed format for different informant content responses. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is free to customize questions to the situation and adjust for sensitivity, using verbal and non-verbal expressions that produce a more conversational tone. This is used to determine if additional themes will emerge as informants relax with candid, reflective, and transparent feedback from the informant (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 95).

In Appendix E, the interview protocol was divided into two parts. Part 1 served to collect demographic information about participants, and Part 2 was used to elicit in-depth responses on participants' personal encounters and significant relationships that provide them with a sense of belongingness on campus. Interview protocol items were grouped by the UNSB framework tenets. The list of protocol

items by tenet were grouped by (1) class belongingness, (2) faculty/pedagogical caring, (3) university belongingness, and (4) social acceptance at university . Extra questions were selected for each category in case participants refused to answer pre-selected questions. Included with the Interview Protocol in Appendix E is a listing of interview questions linked to the American Dream ideal.

## Participants

### *Participant Selection*

Criteria for selection of participants were as follows: Students needed to be Among Americans who were junior or senior students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program in a U.S. college or university.

There were several reasons to recruit upperclassmen. I was interested in selecting upperclassmen over the recent baccalaureate degree recipient for both pragmatic and relational reasons. It is more judicious to search for upperclassmen from either the same college or nearby colleges rather than recent graduates who may have relocated to a larger geographic radius. The latter could be costly and a hindrance to the process of snowballing recruitment.

Second, unlike college graduates, upperclassmen possess current knowledge about how to overcome academic and social challenges. I wanted this study's participants, in their responses to my questions, to be knowledgeable of the experience of their lowerclassmen peers but be at a different stage in the college process to the point

that they could articulate their learnings into advice for first-year and college-seeking secondary students. Pre-college students tackle new encounters with self-identity. First-year students face obstacles in acquiring skills and competencies. They typically are influenced by a shifting mindset to a critical-thinking lens. An upperclassman can use introspection to mentor an underclassman, and the resulting sense of self-respect and social acceptance may affect their sense of belongingness.

Finally, due to proximity in age and enrollment at the same college, lowerclassmen connect better with older students that they dorm, dine, and debate with and are appreciative of credible survival stories shared by juniors and seniors. The shared experiences of upperclassmen and lowerclassmen include the common challenges faced with regard to college administrators, professors, and campus, and this was better for my study than hearing dated stories from recent college graduates. I concluded that the positive perspective that upperclassmen adopt produces a better psychological result for portraying intrinsic motivation and empowerment than looking back after graduation for instant recall and that this would benefit my study.

Academic generations appear to change at the end of a cohort's four-year college experience. Upperclassmen have encountered a similar student interaction and motivation issues as freshmen. College seniors retrospectively identify with a freshman's concerns about the respect and social acceptance associated with feelings of belongingness because these concerns are fresh and close-at-hand.

First, upperclassmen are examples of how belongingness from all echelons of the institution can motivate students to sustain their behaviors as role models for success.

This is true not only for incoming freshmen but for high school Hmong Americans making decisions about how college selection will lead them to academic success, i.e., educational attainment.

In the case of this study, my contacts came from a variety of agencies and individuals, who were able to identify potential Hmong American college juniors and seniors, regardless of U.S. generational citizenship, as participants. To find interviewees, I spoke with Asian American communities, predominantly Chinese American academicians in Central Florida, who were acquainted with Hmong U.S. enclaves. Examples of contacts are provided in Appendix F.

#### *Sampling and Recruitment Procedures*

This study used a combination of purposive and convenience sampling due to socio-lingual and cultural communication limitations between interviewer and informant. Therefore, independent sources, several of which were university professors, doctoral students, healthcare professionals, and self-identified Hmong, were identified. My research qualifications were helpful in screening out those who did not qualify or wish to participate for various reasons.

Upon arrival to the US, the Hmong refugees benefited from automatic immersion by U.S. officials into American culture without local support from governors, mayors, and local officials. Conflict with the populace ensued and drove Hmong to reside in heavily populated Hmong enclaves in disbelief, distanced from the general population. To this day, Hmong communities are tight-knit. A Hmong representative assisted me in

the selection and interface process. This was especially important because of the wide variance of educational level between me as a doctoral candidate researcher and Hmong college students. It was important for me to set the tone of trust and openness with my third party source by finding Hmong or Caucasian American intermediaries who were Hmong peers, faculty, or administrators, who took an interest in the focus of my study. I established contacts through the higher educational system of faculty who have indicated appreciation for my research and have offered to help me find qualified participants. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix G), I reconnected with sources identified in early 2013 who offered to help find participants for my study. My goal was to identify five to eight participants for the study. As the time for interviews neared, a series of events impacted the selection of participants and the interview sites. I was able find five Hmong American students who met the criteria at College 1 and one who met the criteria at College 2. This achieved my goal. The details of these events are discussed in Chapter 4.

Once I located six participants, I briefed them through written correspondence on the purpose of my study, interview logistics, and informed them of a small incentive for their contribution. Actual content of protocols, research questions, and theoretical framework was not discussed with participants prior to the interviews.

### *Building Rapport*

Although I do not hold a unique position in the Hmong Community, I am more aware of Hmong Americans than the average non-Hmong American person of color. My



familiarity with Miao and Hill tribe populations was used to establish mutual identification with Hmong and hill tribe culture especially as it related to their “story cloth” tapestry, one of which I purchased over 20 years ago in Northern Thailand. Another opportunity to build rapport came from my extensive knowledge derived from the last 18 months of research with special attention to the famous Hmong who have succeeded in gaining several degrees in higher education and returned to Hmong communities to offer their services. Appendix D lists notable Hmong and their contributions to Western culture, including the United States. It was imperative to build a trusting, cohesive bond for a five- to ten-minute casual introductory discussion to ease the interaction and disclosure of personal information. This also permitted me to gain first impressions of visual and verbal communication in the interviewee-interviewer relationship. I maintained a professional and respectful demeanor at all times, establishing trust through smiling, frequent eye contact, active listening, and making “small talk” before and after the interviews were completed.

#### Instrumentation: The Interview Protocol

The researcher developed an interview protocol (Appendix E) to be used for data collection based on the USNB theoretical framework selected for use in the study. According to the figure in Appendix E, the Class Belongingness tenet had a corresponding item that was seeking responses that included one or more attributes: (a)self-efficacy; (b) increased intrinsic motivation task value; (c) academic productivity; (d) sense of class belongingness; and (e)non-parental adult (either on or off campus).

The Faculty Openness and Pedagogical Caring tenet generated the protocols that contained the following attributes: (a) not to embarrass publicly, (b) mutual respect for student learning potential, (c) enables/empowers student, (d) belonging to the institution, and (e) global sense of belongingness. The third tenet, University belongingness, produced examples of five protocol items seeking the following attributes: (a) affects outcomes (School scholarship)/Recognition; (b) persistence/incentives; (c) improves self-image; (d) I can be myself; (e) respectful interactions with others is conducive to developing a sense of belonging. The final tenet, Campus-wide Social Acceptance and Respect, shows two examples of protocol items seeking responses that mention some semblance of (a) student's adjustment to college life and cognitive development and (b) overall student satisfaction.

Also, in Appendix E, Part 2A of the survey, entitled Hmong-Relevant American Dream, contains descriptor keywords and a list of protocol examples that coincide with the UNSB tenets. In fact, rather than list those terms, one can read in Part 2A direct linkages of descriptors to tenets.

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between research questions, UNSB tenets, and emergent themes. This ties the process from Chapter 1 to Chapter 6, from research questions to emergent themes.

Table 3

*Relationship of Research Questions to University Sense of Belongingness (UNSB) Tenets by Protocol Items*

Research Questions	UNSB Tenets	Emergent Themes
1. How do U.S. Hmong college students perceive and describe their lived experiences during their college career?	1. Class-level belonging	1. Heritage and Identity
		2. The Armor of UNSB
2. How do U. S. Hmong college students understand their university sense of belongingness (UNSB)?	2. Faculty/pedagogical caring	3. Garnering Resources
		4. Academic Seduction
3. How do U. S. Hmong college students perceive how earning a baccalaureate degree prepares them to participate in the American Dream?	3. University belonging	2. The Armor of UNSB
		3. Garnering Resources
	4. Social acceptance and respect at the university	4. Academic Seduction
		1. Heritage and Identity
		3. Garnering Resources
		4. Academic Seduction

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*Onsite Interview Descriptions*

There were two college/university entities that were used during the data collection process. Five participants attended a small rural college, College 1, with denominational faith beliefs of faculty, administration, and a student body of 600. The state was part of the East coast states to which Hmong families flocked for better agrarian opportunities. The sixth participant met me at the second site which was a coffee shop across the street from a major secular university (College 2) in an urbanized area. College 2 has several regional campuses with a total student enrollment over 60, 800.

Conducting interviews in a college town, especially close to the participants' college of enrollment, was significant in ease of sharing reflections, memories, and characteristics of their respective institutions.

A key advantage of having five of the six participants from one location and college was in not having to consider the variable of geographic differences among participants. The second site had the advantage of proximity to the researcher's base, minimizing resources, and availability options for the sixth participant at the institution. It provided an opportunity for the protocol to probe for contrasts in the first college. It was important to understand if both sectors of higher education had the existence of campus groups that contributed to participants' sense of belongingness.

#### Researcher Qualifications

As an experienced corporate trainer, and postsecondary faculty member, I have spent two decades utilizing and instructing others in interview methodologies. My practitioner experience was enhanced by my doctoral education in qualitative research and interviewing techniques. One of my part-time jobs over the last five years has been to transcribe audio interviews into text transcriptions for further analysis.

I used virtual frameworks which were familiar to me and my informants as well as phone and face-to-face methods. The only exception was in having face-to-face meetings when I could arrange to be introduced to Hmong Americans who lived within a 30-mile radius of Orlando metro. These are also methods I have used previously in data collection.

Prior to each interview, I engaged in 10-15 minutes of simple conversation to permit the interviewee to get to know me better. This let participants know that I was totally open without judgment, thus making them feel comfortable, confidential, and unthreatened. My goal during this stage of data collection was to become a part of the interviewees' world so as to be seen as someone trustworthy with some level of identification with their college experiences as a Hmong American. According to Moustakas (1994), building a relationship with the informant will present transparency, authenticity, and trustworthiness to prevent falsehoods and dishonesty during the interview process. My chair was available to me as a source of direction if setbacks occurred. I remained flexible throughout the process in using challenges as teaching and reporting opportunities in the findings of the study.

### Data Collection

The interview protocol (Appendix E) was used to elicit responses to the questions in individual interviews with each of the six Hmong American participants. Data gathered in the interviews were used to answer the three research questions which guided the study. The researcher used the interview protocol (Appendix E) based on the USNB theoretical framework selected for use in the study. Field notes, described in the following section, also contributed to the data available for analysis.

The process by which participants at College 1 were accessed to be interviewed differed from that of the single participant at College 2. The details surrounding the data collection process at College 1 are explained in detail in Chapter 4. The prospective

participant at College 2 was contacted via telephone and emailed a participant recruitment letter (Appendix H) explaining the study and requesting her participation. Follow-up phone calls and emails were used to gauge her interest in participation and her availability, as well as to schedule the interview. She was then emailed the participant confirmation letter with the date and time of the arranged interview.

### *Field Notes*

Field notes are researcher recollections about the setting and environment in which the interview takes place; for example, weather conditions, meeting place ambience, participant reactions to incidents that occurred during the interview appointment or towards upcoming appointments that include verbalizations unrelated to the interview protocol or focus. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Field notes consist of documents, interview transcripts, pictures, statistics, and other material that become important enhancement tools to other methods of collecting data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). There are two types of field notes that a researcher may choose to use: descriptive and reflective (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Descriptive field notes are objective observations of what has taken place in the field, whereas reflective notes are subjective accounts of the interview experience. Descriptive field notes typically contain the observer's behavior, description of the physical setting, portrayal of the interviewee, description of activities, accounts of certain events and a reconstruction of dialogue. Reflective field notes may include reflections on ethical dilemmas, method, analysis, and the observer's frame of mind and behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In this study, I

used a semi-structured interview approach and incorporated both descriptive and reflective note taking.

### Data Analysis

Once transcription of interviews was completed, the data were organized using open coding to initially sort general themes and to subsequently use axial coding to disaggregate core themes. The outcome of axial coding formed a cluster or grouping of related items that related concepts to each other (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the open inquiry of my data, I adhered to the four basic guidelines proposed by Strauss (1987):

- (1) ask a specific and consistent set of questions, (2) analyze the data minutely,
- (3) frequently interrupt the coding to write a theoretical note, and (4) never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, and so forth, until the data shows it to be relevant (pp. 251-253)

Keeping these suggestions in mind, I read each transcription line by line and highlighted anything notable. Second, I re-read the transcription, assigning a code to the highlighted statements. Lastly, I tallied the codes to see which were most prominent.

Transcription and comparison of the interviews also were used to facilitate the process. According to the UNSB framework facet of the American Dream used to model the research questions, and being in the preliminary stages of this project, open coding seemed most appropriate to arrive at group themes. Another factor that was addressed in the coding of data was the construction of cases. The process of transcription of the interviews produced volumes of information. For the six two-hour interviews, I

generated approximately 120 pages of data (20 pages for each individual interview). I needed to determine which of three organizing systems I would use: (a) cases based on each interview, considering each to be a case; (b) cases based on emergent themes, thereby including all the information for all respondents in designated research areas; or (c) cases based on the three research questions.

### Trustworthiness

In order for qualitative research to be taken seriously by other researchers, validation and reliability are required to make the outcome of the research design believable. Lincoln & Guba, (1985) established several guidelines to obtain trustworthiness, reinforcing scholarship integrity and setting the tone that the research is “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300). Trustworthiness is determined by the level of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I did not experience any major obstacles demonstrating validity and reliability of methods and procedures.

There should be evidence for acknowledging internal and external validity of the research design process. For internal validity in a naturalistic study, Lincoln & Guba, (1985) proposed four guidelines for detecting the presence of: internal validity. First, constancy in co-researcher observations and measurements used. Second, when one begins a study with a specific number of participants and before the third interview the interviewee withdraws unannounced, the researcher should have a contingency plan or a deliberate written account of the details of the experimental mortality to report in the



study. Third, when there is an occurrence of variations in how selection criteria were interpreted, i.e., differential selection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), there is a risk that the internal validity is threatened; however, factoring these guidelines into the study can possibly salvage and support the trustworthiness of the protocols and other research design methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

External validity occurs when the researcher can standardize the outcomes of the study for application by other future researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity is characterized by selection effects, history effects, setting effects, and construct effects, all of which influence validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Selection effects happen when the researcher examines a paradigm that does not relate to the participant criteria or when the presence of the construct is not detectable in the nature of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). History effects appear in unique encounters with the group being examined. For my study, generalization was challenging and was a limiting factor in my research design.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) rendered that reliability can be strengthened through repetition and accuracy. They cautioned, however, to avoid vagueness, long analyses, and incorrect interpretation in using measureable findings.

Objectivity is the last important variable to develop trustworthiness and is achievable with an intersubjective agreement to get consensus from more than one investigator on a particular phenomenological situation. Prior to conducting the study, Moustakas (1994) recommended clearing the mind of the epoche or interviewee of predispositions, biases, attitudes about the phenomenon so as to enter the interviewing

process without any preset thoughts about the interviewer or the phenomena. Moustakas referred to the epoche as the “process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, and predispositions” (p. 85). The epoche helps the informant see subjects as they really are. This can be accomplished by bracketing minds from self-association with the phenomena, regardless of similar experiences.

After a few minutes, and once trust is established, interviews can become conversational. It becomes easier to have a dialogue around the phenomena where the informant becomes freer in expression to probe feelings and impressions, attitudes and emotions may emerge through recalling specific instances; and motivations emerge openly and in discussion. These feelings, remembering memories, and reflections define the noetic side of the phenomenological interview which is present in the participant’s comments and non-verbalisms about the topic. The participant also experiences the idyllic noemic side of ideas (Moustakas, 1994).

When the interviews were completed, the next stage, phenomenological reduction, was used to summarize and reinforce the essentials of the data collection episode. During the transcription period, the researcher can begin to identify clusters that formed themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This contributed to a comprehensive evaluation of how the themes were related to participant points of view, connotations of reflections, and integration of thoughts about the experience and the reality of the present. Only then was the researcher able to generate an integrated pattern that synthesized the interview data with the research questions to find possible answers or to find patterns that satisfied the adapted UNSB framework through the lens of the American ideal.

### *Triangulation*

After interviews were completed, but before participants left the room, I asked them to listen to me restate their responses for accuracy on my notes and on the audio-recordings of the interview. This provided unexpected suggestions for the remaining stages of the data coding, thematic patterns, and a better interpretation of the interview for each individual since no two interviews were the same. I was challenged to recall fine nuances of the interaction to make critical decisions at times of uncertainty. No changes were made during the interview from participant feedback.

### *Institutional Review Board (IRB)*

Since this study required working directly with human subjects, approval by the university's Institutional Review Board (Appendix G) was sought before the commencement of interviews in order to ensure that this study was carried out in an ethical manner. There were several ethical issues to be addressed in this project. First, the participant had the right to have all of the information pertaining to the study upon the agreement to participate, and throughout the duration of the study. The researcher had an ethical obligation to inform the participant of any changes that may have arisen while the participant was actively involved, as this may have affected the participant's willingness to participate. Information that was reported in the informed consent included: who is conducting the study, the title and purpose of the study, what the participant is expected to do, how long participation is expected to be, incentives if any, expected risks and benefits, a confidentiality statement, and how findings will be utilized. In this case,

findings were utilized for the researcher's dissertation project and for potential peer-reviewed manuscripts.

### *Confidentiality*

The issue of confidentiality was imperative for the purposes of this project. Given the fact that participants were likely to disclose personal information during the interviews, I removed any identifying information from the transcribed data itself. I assured participants that anything discussed in the interview would be kept in strict confidence. This was especially important in securing the data. In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to the participants. Once an interview was transcribed, it was saved in one location. The document that indicates the pseudonym with the corresponding original name was stored in a separate location. Interviews were audio recorded, and notes were taken simultaneously. Audio recorded interviews were erased once fully transcribed.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Once I had defended my proposal, I submitted an application and received approval to conduct the research from the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board (Appendix G). Cultural considerations of the participants were taken into account, and confidentiality as well as the option for interviewees to not answer questions was considered. Consent forms were distributed to obtain participants' mutual consent and concurrence with audio taping and anonymity.

The researcher must ensure ethical practices at all times during the course of the study (Moustakas, 1994). A semi-structured interview approach is open-ended yet guided to receive insight on previous responses from unexpected impressions that can improve future use of this research design for data analysis. The researcher may find herself in a situation where the participant is in a dangerous life threatening situation, e.g., suicide attempt, physical abuse. It is the researcher's obligation to report such an occurrence in order to prevent a tragic event. Participants were made aware of this ethical obligation before the commencement of the study. Moustakas inspired all researchers to be ethical in respecting participants' privacy and confidentiality. Moustakas first indicated that the researcher must convey assurances to the participants on confidentiality by securing a signed consent form from them to protect their privacy. Secondly, it is imperative to clarify that at any point and for whatever reason, the participant is free to withdraw from the study. Moustakas also standardized rules for researchers to practice in the interview stage to remove obstacles that hinder trust and transparency between the participant and the interviewer. Third, the method used to protect human subjects from misuse or abuse was the review of the study by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to contacting participants with written guarantees from the interviewer and his or her committee chair that they would protect interviewees during the data collection period.

Moustakas (1994) recommended that if possible, interviewers should reinforce that the interviewees are volunteer and that their time is valued. This is usually shown by offering an incentive to informants as a token of appreciation. I offered participants \$20

gifts as an incentive for their participation. The need for assurances in participant confidentiality can be demonstrated by using aliases or pseudonyms assigned to each informant. I used an alphanumeric system to apply this security feature.

### *Originality Report*

It is mandatory that all dissertations qualify for approval of originality using Turnitin.com. This tool is set up by the ‘teach and tool’ checks for plagiarism using the web to verify the submission is in fact original and does not match the database of papers submitted. The Higher Education & Policy Studies Program mandates submission of all graded works, papers, and examinations with an acceptable originality score of 10% or less to be considered eligible for evaluation. In order to validate scores higher than 10%, it is recommended to delete bibliography entries, exclude proposals, or initial submissions of dissertation drafts as well as any direct quotes to decrease the originality score to meet the 10% limit. In my case, my proposal score was 12%. However, after submission of an initial dissertation draft, the score was 20%. Once bibliographical material, prior submissions, quotations and hits of less than 20% were excluded, the score was further reduced to 8%.

### Summary

This chapter has detailed the research design and provided a rationale for its use in the study. The proposed methodology and methods used to collect data have been described. Six participants were selected purposively for interview according to the

criteria stated. Selection occurred with the assistance of a third-party academic, followed by a contingency snowball effect on participant-peers. Subsequent chapters in the dissertation deal with details associated with participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, the presentation of findings, and recommendations and implications for practice and further study.

## CHAPTER 4 WHATEVER CAN HAPPEN, WILL

### Introduction

This chapter describes two parallel journeys: (a) a secret journey of profound personal growth fueled by my need for approval and fear of failure, my drive to succeed at all costs, and my deep personal spirituality and (b) a scholarly journey fraught with unforeseen obstacles that seemed destined to derail my greatest ambition, to earn my PhD.

Paradoxically, recruitment and data collection were a part of the dissertation process that I had always believed spoke to my strengths: interpersonal skills, extroverted personality, experience in professional networking, and manuscript transcription. Boy was I wrong! At every step of the process of participant recruitment and data collection, I experienced cultural barriers, financial challenges due to having to fund my own travel, technology challenges/failures, and technical problems with transcribing participant interviews.

### Participant Recruitment

#### *Impact of Culture*

Several aspects of Hmong culture impacted the recruitment of participants for my study: paternalism, shamanism, and a limited experience with how higher education can benefit Hmong (especially women). In order to recruit Hmong students effectively, I integrated social media to identify Hmong networks of students and locations to conduct



research. The technology enabled me to get inside the mind of Hmong college students, educators, and the culture. Online networks enabled a comprehensive inquiry into this topic. It was helpful to know what to expect in mindset and idioms when I needed to interpret the transcripts. In fact, I gained authentic understanding on the dynamics of second, third, and fourth generation conversations with educated Hmong and faculty located in my venue and participants through this site. As my qualitative research progressed, technology emerged as a viable source of membership in social media networks of the researched group.

The second source of information was a more traditional leader in the Hmong community, the campus faculty advisor to the Hmong student fellowship group. Her inviting personality allowed me to get close to someone who “rubbed shoulders” with Hmong students. The Greek system of sororities and fraternities provided another avenue into the Asian American campus community. Using an etic informant-strategy allowed me to see the Hmong perspective on issues and was important for me to gain multiple perspectives. Etic thought kept me connected to the exploration and into deep levels of observations.

As a novice to Hmong heritage, listening to emic explanations of lived experiences complemented my knowledge. Hmong websites enabled me to join private networks of Hmong college students and educators. Technology has gone beyond the traditional outcomes of human sources on a researched group and a medium to join in that group. In terms of participant recruitment, a Hmong pastor, who searched for Hmong college students he was close to in the community, became my informant. The

pastor also explained puzzling aspects of the culture. He not only explained Hmong cultural characteristics, but he was willing to participate in my study.

### Paternalism

Traditional Hmong culture is characterized by the strong central role played by male heads of families; the father or other male members of the family provide Hmong families with a paternalistic structure with little influence from wives and older children. Hmong high school students are strongly influenced to accept their father's preferences regarding whether to work before college or after the baccalaureate.

Although this rigid paternalism weakens with the second and third generation Hmong, the influence of the male *pater familias* is often still significant. I found my initial Florida contact through a bi-racial (Chinese/Caucasian) missionary couple who were friends with a Hmong pastor in Tampa. They took an interest in my study and wanted to support an ethnicity with which they had prior experience. When I contacted the Lutheran pastor of a predominantly first and second generation Hmong Christian congregation, he responded favorably to our mutual acquaintance and that my husband was a pastor with an Asian-American Christian Missionary Alliance church. The pastor informed me he knew of two females, a college graduate and a master's degree student that he would follow up with on my behalf. The women promised him they would contact me. What a relief! I remember taking a deep breath and thought my Florida option for a Hmong participant search would soon end. However, I learned that the agreement to call was expressed without seeking parental approval. Once Hmong fathers

were consulted, the women were prohibited from contacting me. When there was no response from the first woman after five days, I felt pressed for time and decided to call the pastor. He suggested the second woman and sounded more hopeful that her father would approve. This time the pastor began calling me every 8-12 hours to follow-up on whether progress was made. After the third day, he knew this was hopeless and bowed out, indicating those were the only two contacts he knew who were college educated. I felt relieved that my interface was a Hmong Christian who was candid and trustworthy; this reassured me that this incident was nothing personal. For the first time I had encountered bias as a qualitative researcher; I believed that I was viewed by my target research population as a trespasser. In any event, I initiated contacts in Georgia as well as in South and North Carolina. Hmong communities had been established in several southern states and I looked to these areas for additional sources of contacts. As my skin thickened, I quickly learned how to separate my personhood from my professional work, and that was priceless. Professionally, I shifted my focus of my research protocol in first and second probes of the questions to achieve my recruitment and data collection objective. The purpose of shifting my focus was to recruit and select qualified participants according to my target criteria and to be judgment-free in regard to participants. This supported bracketing biases from my belief system, suspending judgment, personal biases, or any reactions that exhibited negative-positive and non-verbal beliefs.

I assumed a poker face and shifted my listening to my co-researchers, which automatically deflected any leadership or authority role and masked my feelings towards

them. I identified with the counselor or social workers who should not internalize harsh words or actions. I did not want to be accused of pandering but did want to maintain neutrality, to encourage trust and transparency. For me to accomplish this expediently, I showed my participants that I could laugh at my jokes and myself. I put on my actress persona from my sales and professorial training and experiences during my career. During the first five minutes of our introductions, I had listened attentively and could rephrase their responses with empathy which convinced them that I understood both what they said and how they felt. Although I did not specify criteria for which college sector to find potential Hmong recruits, it ironically was a Christian Missionary Alliance college in Northern Georgia that responded favorably to my inquiry (for Hmong enrollments at the upper-level) by indicating that they had a group of Hmong students who might be willing to participate in my study. By this time, I was beginning to get a bit anxious about finding participants. I was relieved and hopeful when I received positive interest from several Hmong students to participate.

### Shamanism

As mentioned in regard to paternalism, Hmong culture has been strongly influenced by the practice of Shamanism. However, in the last 200 years before the Hmong Western migration, Catholic and protestant missionaries led Southeast Asian Hmong to faith beliefs in Christianity. Once Hmong arrived in the United States, U.S. Christian missionaries helped Hmong resettle spiritually and through the practical provisions of food, clothing and shelter. After the Hmong U.S. migration, Shamans were

influential in building hostile barriers and in discouraging the co-mingling of Hmong with youth from other cultures, regardless of whether both youth were in the same class or same U.S. generation. Shamans channel their influential spiritual powers and trances over the fathers and men of Hmong communities.

College recruiters, not unlike me, have fallen victim to not recognizing the shaman gatekeeper or how to circumvent their spiritual influences. Shamans are threatened by potential extinction, loss of power, materialism, and the loss of their following. Put differently, if tomorrow's Hmong men are enlightened from higher educational attainment, or spiritual conversion, Shaman will become a phenomenon of the past. If the CMA can recruit U.S. Hmong for U.S. CMA colleges with large scholarships, secular U.S. college recruiters should take notes. The aim for prospective success for Hmong students is not for them to lose Hmong identity or change religions but to improve the status of the U.S. Hmong community through education.

I am usually reticent to publicly discuss my personal life, but in qualitative research as researcher for this study, my transparency was critical in demonstrating my positionality and intentionality with my participants, peers, and fellow scholars. The design for the present research required the use of qualitative phenomenological data collection methods so as to bond with all parties during interviews; thus, I was as much a participant as my student interviewees.

My 1.5 generation (Gen) Caribbean background intersects the religious transition of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen. Hmong. I was born into a Trinidadian family that practiced the amalgam of Catholicism and African and East Indian occult practices. Instead of having

the Hmong interpretation of Catholicism or Protestantism threat to voodoo, Caribbean and other culture groups in the Americas integrate both Christianity and the occult into one syncretic faith. I did not want to be a distraction from others who wondered if I could withhold judgment from Hmong whose family's set of beliefs changed in college Shamanism to other belief systems such as Christianity. My curiosity and identification with Hmong life experiences never ceases to amaze me. In my situation, before the age of 17, I was introduced to the syncretic Christian and occult practices and experienced a double-mindedness allegiance to the occult and Catholicism. It was not until I moved to college, away from my family customs and practices, that I confronted the bipolarization of my belief system. I developed a faith built on biblical principles instead of a priestly or self-appointed "seer" belief and decided to resolve my double-mindedness. I view my spiritual transformation solely my choice, devoid of my family's beliefs

It is one thing to prepare for consequences of proselytizing and it is another to encounter an attack from Hmong parents because of my identity as a Christian pastor's wife first, not as a mature doctoral candidate with pure motives towards supporting Hmong in higher education. I would probably tread lightly with my research if confronted one-on-one by a Hmong father without the presence of a Hmong ally.

One thing I have observed that bothers me is that Hmong, and perhaps other Asians as well, have difficulty accepting one person serving more than one profession or sideline avocation. It seems difficult for some Asians to see me as a Ph.D. candidate and as a professor simultaneously, let alone as a pastor's wife in the Asian community. But it might stem from individual and collective cultural differences and one's role in their

circles or in society at large. I've learned how to ignite the country's Hmong community transnational communication system with each other about my research on them.

Through the literature, I am also familiar with Hmong biases towards non-Shamans, Americans, other marginalized groups, and the education discipline. In these instances, I appeared initially as a prospective enemy to the parent even before I start. In no way, did I want to let the negativism associated with research impact the project intended for the good of Hmong and of U.S. Higher Education. At the same time, because I am an American, I did not expect to be questioned about the safety of my seeking adult participants over 18, 21, or 24 year old who agreed to participate. I was surprised and happy to learn the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) denomination had a long-running relationship with Hmong culture. My husband and I had only recently partnered with the CMA and did not know that the denomination had its own denominational colleges.

#### Sources for Contacts

I engaged in an extensive search for new sources of participants in Florida and its surrounding states. Besides the obvious National Hmong Associations who would send me to local chapters, a new platoon of contacts emerged from central and southern Florida Universities, especially ones near large Hmong communities. The Christian Churches, particularly those who had denominational affiliation with my Asian-American Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) church in Orlando, was an avenue I did not have in my Midwest and California sources for contacts. I also revisited my former contacts to

inquire about their Hmong contacts in the Southeast. Another new focus was social networking. Originally I did not consider its usefulness in brokering relationships. I reconnected with a renowned professor and editor of Hmong publications who recommended I join selected national-level professional E-networks among post-secondary educators of Hmong students that proved to be most fruitful to me.

Accessing all forms of communication made me aware of how digitized my research methods had become to be able to find college students, professors, and staff; to locate venues; and enlist collaborative support to my research. In some cases, I realized that one type of recruitment communication might overlap with another type of recruitment communication, but I saw that as having a positive effect. Given the highly-networked nature of Hmong culture, several communications might need to be sent to build a kind of relationship with recruits.

#### Making Contacts and Arranging for Interviews

My Social Media Facebook informant was particularly helpful to me. Dr. Mark Pfeifer, editor of *The Hmong Studies Journal*, sent me the link and encouraged me to join it. He thought it would be a good professional and research membership for learning more about Hmong culture, Hmong college students, and college faculty interactions with Hmong issues. Thus, after acceptance by its coordinator, I joined the Hmong College Students and Educators network. I posted and waited for interest in participating in my study. I read the website daily and found a photo banner from the College 1 campus and the room where the Hmong Student Fellowship met in North Georgia. After



a seven-day membership on the online Hmong educator network, I contacted the faculty advisor for the Fellowship group, sent College 1 approvals, descriptions of the study, and special paperwork on student confidentiality and anonymity, along with my University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board Outcome Letter. Fortunately, the paper work submitted established credibility, privacy, and interest in the study which was approved after further review by the dean of students. Within four days, my study was approved and I had secured administrative support to schedule interviews. The outcome of the technology informant was not conventional but was innovative, expedient, and targeted my interests. I realized how blessed I was when the number of students I needed were able to be scheduled for 90-minute interviews in one day and that I was able to secure accommodations on the campus at an outstanding low rate. There was a greater purpose to my research than met the eye on paper.

Eventually, through the Fellowship liaison Hmong female administrator, I met students at College 1 in pre-arranged interview time slots at the college. My contacts at College 1 turned out to be accepting and enthusiastic about the purpose of my research and took the initiative to arrange for me to lean on them to book a quiet venue equipped with materials and basically whatever I needed to complete the task. They facilitated my request through administrative channels to gain approval for me to conduct in-person interviews with Hmong students on the campus.

In addition, my source intermediaries at College 1 took responsibility to organize signups, promoted the research as a “must do for students,” slotted interested parties into

five 90-minute interview times. I could never have successfully completed these tasks in less than seven days.

In my situation two major factors helped me instantaneously get the six participants I needed for my research. The first factor was that I was able to work quickly at College 1 using a top-down sales approach. I learned from my life as a practitioner in sales and academia that when prospecting a new location, one must start with a top-down approach, going to the highest level of the organization first, then work one's way down. That approach streamlines the process from start to finish. This was the approach I used at College 1, and it was successful.

The second factor relates to the journey of recruitment which goes beyond recruiting participants. It also related to the journey in the entire process of finding two universities that were extreme opposites of each other and different campus groups to belong. The journey is not just about Destination College 1-Georgia. It is about the research journey through different college environments, Hmong students whose lived experiences were vastly different, logistics on having an insider informant to pre-arrange a day of five interviews versus my singular control of the interview meeting. As the researcher, phenomenology is not just collecting perspectives but observing how the environment affects participant responses and relating in field notes ambient venue characteristics. Time management was executed differently in the College 1 and College 2 instances. The College 1 effort came together in two weeks with interviews occurring in one day. However, my search at College 2 was a Herculean effort of 18 months to prearrange one interview and all the logistics by myself. The lengthy process I used on

the College 2 campus, only to find Hmong students were not identifiable by state university registrars, was a learning experience in university differences. Interestingly, just before leaving for Georgia, I spoke with a College 2 Hmong senior who had shown an interest but kept cancelling our meetings. Ironically, while I was interviewing participants at College 1, the College 2 student I pursued for 18 months emailed me that she was available to meet. She asked me to contact her before the last week of April's final exam week. I returned to Orlando to find her positive response email in my inbox.

Though I had completed my five interviews that were required for the study, I conducted the interview with the College 2 student, and after participating in the interview, this student offered to refer more Hmong friends to me. Because I had sufficient data to move forward, I did not contact any other students. I did feel fortunate, however, to have an "extra" interview as a backup in the event that some problem arose with one of the College 1 participant interviews.

### Funding

I was naïve during my research planning to think only about cost-efficient SKYPE use for interviews. In retrospect, I should have run a cost analysis on all potential interviewing mechanisms, e.g., face-to-face. My single-minded focus on finding participants in one place did not alert me to the need to account for shifting the means to collect data. For Florida, I only envisioned gas and tolls commuting to interview venues. Although I had alternate plans to recruit participants, I did not have alternate plans collection and analysis of interview data. From former practitioner

experiences, I built in incentives for participants that I knew would be participating on a voluntary basis, but that was the only consideration given to the need for financial resources. My research design, methods, recruitment, and collection plans did not account for the necessity of traveling to Georgia to conduct interviews.

### Travel

Travel expenses to my alternate plan for interviewing could have varied from \$100 to \$500 depending on total miles, gas prices, accommodations and meals, all increasing the farther North one needed to travel. Fortunately, without budget or academic funding, my husband, friend, and son, spontaneously responded to an impromptu data collection initiative to grab a “once-in-a-research-lifetime” opportunity.

What I learned is that one cannot predict if family and friends will be able to move as quickly as a project deadline requires. However, rather than risking the loss of scarce recruits, I moved quickly to arrange interviews in Georgia despite not having allotted funding for this possibility. Delays in analysis, defense, and graduation depend on completion of timeline milestones. If I had to do it again, I would have at least \$500 reserved for just such an unforeseen interview possibility. There have been tremendous tradeoffs and personal sacrifices invested in earning my Ph.D. when compared to the alternative of earning a double income from the professoriate and management consulting training, both of which I had worked at for over 20 years. The sacrifice benefited me by (a) legitimately guiding my students into higher education, (b) solidifying credibility in my faculty qualifications, (c) strengthening my professional earning power, and (d)

becoming a role model for my doctoral candidate son, and my daughter, a master's graduate in mental health and psychological counseling. From the beginning, my motivation for educational achievement has been centered on my long term goal to teach in higher education internationally.

Over the last seven years in the doctoral program, I've spent close to \$50,000, as an older student, excluding an assistantship stipend that covered the first three years of tuition, fees, gas money, and health insurance. Once my academic interests transitioned to a new track, my three-year assistantship ended, and I was left spending \$5,000 to 8,000 annually

My academic interests refocused in year four to pursuing a career in higher education. Because I transitioned into a new track without an assistantship, my expenses were \$5,000 to 8,000 annually, a four-year expenditure of \$26,000 financed through unsubsidized loans. It was stressed in the early part of my enrollment to forego a part-time or full-time job to balance time and learning demands. When I complied with the advice, I lost a total income package of \$60,000 annually that included health insurance, participation in a lucrative IRA program for teachers. While employed, I received reimbursement for travel expenses to teach at five regional campuses and my own private office for student meetings. Imagine the loss of that professional earning and its contribution to our household of a missionary pastor who left corporate America for world humanitarian and spiritual outreach. Needless to say, the family has been stressed but ecstatic that I have committed to the terminal academic degree in researching my passion in cross-cultural, social science, and higher education and management training.

## Incentives

As a full-time student without a job, I can totally understand the relationship between motivation, money, and time. Students can legitimately ask “What’s in it for me?” In assessing what an appropriate amount of an incentive or token of appreciation would be for a 90-minute interview, I thought \$10 was too little and \$25 more than enough for an upper-level student. I wanted to offer a token of appreciation of \$20 but did not have the funding. I settled on \$15 because I thought 10 dollars simply was too small an amount. Some guidelines to fairly reward the motivated volunteer students to account for age, profession, duration of interview and nature of content in the response would be helpful to researchers.

## Transcription

### *Recording Devices and Compatibility*

A recording device is a researcher’s auditor and interviewer’s robot to back up and fast forward. It works in tandem with field notes, personal notes, and whatever can be found to record verbal and non-verbal expressions. I planned to use two recording devices, just in case malfunctioned. One recording used a tangible recorder device. The other recording used a Microsoft application that audio records, features note taking and editing capability, and can be downloaded directly into MS WORD.

I did not have a hand-held audio recorder that professional transcription services use to manipulate the controls of an interview, and I did not understand why I should

value the old-fashioned hand-held device over the latest digitized tools to do audio recording. The older device has perfect controls of fast forward, play, backup, pause and reverse and those are critical controls for a transcriptionist to use for audio and file manipulation.

I created my problem by not using a one-stop shopping solution for transcribing interviews, i.e., Microsoft for recording and transcribing interviews. Using Microsoft software for compatibility and transferability eliminates several steps and prevents technical challenges in converting and re-converting interview recordings. For example, if I used a triad method with the Sound Recorder Accessories feature built into Windows to record the interview, and transferred the recording over to Microsoft WORD to transcribe the interview, I could have backed up the interview with a second Microsoft recording software solution, i.e., *OneNote* software recording application. This triangular approach would leverage the compatibility of Microsoft applications. Using internal computer recording software located on the laptop is the optimum way to manage the data recording part of data collection. In a future research project, I would only use software that emanates from my laptop.

Besides software and device compatibility, the size of the audio file may exceed the maximum size for attachments to text, email, airdrop, or Facebook transfer. If files are over 30 MB or over 60 minutes, the iPhone Voice Memo application will not function properly because the cellphone voice recorder is not designed for research or lecture purposes. Instead the Voice Memo application is for grocery lists and to do items. Thus, if one knows that an interview will exceed 60 minutes, a simple phone voice recorder

should not be used. Five years ago, in my qualitative class, we worked only with hand held digital recorders and field notebooks. No other options were presented. Technology changes so rapidly. If I had known that there are some recording solutions for research (not music or lecture), I could have saved myself time in the transcription process.

### *Finding and Hiring Transcribers*

The search for a transcriptionist has been the biggest “thorn in the flesh,” and I am still ailing from that experience. I thought I needed a lengthy period of time to seek and evaluate the most effective solution to transcription. Without a financial research budget to manage a costly phase of data collection, I deliberated for six months on how to circumvent costs for transcription services without (a) sacrificing quality and (b) overextending my capabilities to multitask in developing participant profiles and writing this chapter of the dissertation. Initially I started writing Chapter 4 thinking the transcriptionist that I pre-engaged (a fast typist with lots of experience transcribing interviews) would start immediately to transcribe interviews. What I did not realize was the importance of ensuring the adequacy of the versions of Microsoft Office and Microsoft Windows the transcriptionist used, especially when transmitting a non-Microsoft audio recording. At the rate of speed that technology changes, I assumed most of us were familiar with Google Drive as a method for transferring. I was disappointed that the transcriptionist used Windows 95, which was a version from over 10 years ago, especially since she offered to transcribe these very large files. After three weeks of considering different modes of sending these large files with older software that did not



work well with non-Microsoft, audio and .mp4a files, I realized the magnitude of the problem, and the stress was overwhelming.

I eventually realized in May 2014 that though I had initially engaged a transcriptionist, she was no longer available for the task, and I had to take it on. Having to adjust to not outsourcing the transcription phase due to the lack of \$1,000 had consequences for my projected timeline with a prolonged graduation date. The only way to handle the frustration was to rejoice in the opportunity for character building. I mentally resolved that ultimately transcription was my responsibility.

At this point I sought advice from my chair on the prioritization of completing Chapters 4 and 5 and the six transcriptions and refocused my efforts on transcriptions first. At various points in the transcription process, various friends provided encouragement and some transcription assistance which was a blessing. My daughter became a steady resource, offering her transcription services when her time permitted. Transcription was completed over a period of four months (May-August, 2014) and was interwoven with the writing of Chapters 4 and 5. It should be noted that all who assisted in transcription signed confidentiality statements so as to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of those interviewed.

#### Other Technology Challenges

During the planning stage of the data collection process, I should have spent some mission-critical time investigating the limitations of my laptop, and overall disadvantages of data collection tools and methods. From day one, my laptop had a suspicious noise

that was indeterminable but indicative of hard drive failure. It became increasingly problematic and wreaked havoc as I started transcribing and writing this chapter.

There were also problems that could have been avoided in designing my qualitative survey so that it could be more easily analyzed. It produced a combination of multiple-choice, short answers: yes/no, and true/false. I initially considered using a data analysis tool that was better suited to samples larger than mine; thus, in the middle of data collection, I abandoned the software after further probing its capabilities. In my case, although the software analysis tool was not suitable, it was easy for me to manually analyze results mainly because my  $N$  was so small.

Despite the challenges, I painstakingly pushed through each event with no regrets, and I gained knowledge and understanding of how technology can either support or destroy the best laid research plans. Knowing what I know now, I can guarantee a new and improved data collection research process that exudes efficiency and effectiveness for my future research projects.

In summary, this account is a reflection of challenges I encountered after priceless doctoral theoretical training. These events were not formulaic, but uniquely mine. Others may have similar or totally different experiences, but the learning factors dwell in how one handles the challenges, which is what makes them uniquely one's own. This is the lifelong learning of a researcher; one that is full of synthesis and not just theoretical applications. Believe me when I say my research passions were heightened because of what I endured throughout a set of unexpected challenges.

## CHAPTER 5 STICKING TO THE PROTOCOL: FINDING POWER IN QUIET VOICES

*A socially inclusive society is defined as one where “all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity.” Social exclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community (Cappo, 2002).*

### Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of college students’ sense of university belongingness (Freeman et al., 2007). The researcher explored emic descriptions of Hmong students’ lived college experiences during their upper and lower grade level segments. The Hmong reflected on the contrast in behavior, attitudes, and decision-making between the first two years and last two years of a baccalaureate program and participation in the American Dream. Participant comments focused on perceptions of the differences in campus experiences and significant relationships between their nascent freshman and sophomore (lower-level) years compared with their junior and senior grades (upper-level).

### Conducting the Interviews

The six interviews occurred in the spring term of 2014, within the small denominational and large state university college sectors. I used an interview protocol (Appendix E) that was open-ended and thematic to the tenets of the university sense of belongingness (UNSB) theoretical framework. The documentation I provided to prospective participants regarding consent and confidentiality described in detail the

measures built into the study design to protect confidentiality and anonymity of participants. This approach created a secure platform for students to reflect on and respond to questions regarding their sense of belongingness during college experiences. In addition, the selection of a qualitative phenomenology allowed for the examination of participant interpretations of struggles and motivations related to achieving educational goals and ultimately the American Dream.

The protocol questions were derived from the university sense of belongingness tenets and arranged according to the order of the illustration of the theoretical model framework's tenets. During the audio-recorded interviews, the field notes indicated the need for knowledge on related topics for a deeper understanding of the student's perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Interview questions were informal enough to further probe participant statements to unleash deeper understanding and state of recollection. At the end of the interview, several participants mentioned that the deliberate questions were helpful in providing thoughtful responses.

Canvassing for participants was easier than expected with the help from a College 1 Hmong administrator. Due to technical difficulties, the written survey was administered prior to the interview instead of completing it online the day before the interview. Initially, children of Hmong are reared to remain guarded and there are tendencies to encourage Hmong to retreat unnoticed and avoid conflict when unprovoked harassment occurs. Although these were 90-minute semi-structured interviews, the duration of interviews averaged 42 minutes and ranged from 32 to 62 minutes, with an

additional 15 minutes to complete demographic surveys. At the end of the interviews, participants stated that introspection improved their understanding of their college career.

After the fifth and last interview at the college, I realized how much I had benefitted personally from meeting this exemplary group of college seniors. I witnessed the ethos of Hmong inner strength and intrinsic motivation that erased stereotypes, bias, and disparagement written in the literature.

I experienced a sense of purpose when I administered the protocol to culturally proud students who were eager to reflect and share with a non-Hmong. Common factors that challenge U.S. Hmong are English fluency, financial resources, and negotiating a space between their Hmong culture and the culture of the US educational system.

Three participants completed all four years of the undergraduate program at College 1, and two transferred to College 1 from a community college with an associate's degree. One participant attended a state university, completing all degree requirements at that institution. Tellingly, one participant, who attended only College 1, had parents with college degrees, was in a higher socio-economic class, and therefore did not qualify for financial aid and did not need a job. The two participants who transferred to College 1 were familiar with the campus environment and were well prepared to be successful at College 1. Although both displayed quiet personalities, the two participants who transferred to College 1 demonstrated self-confidence in selecting college courses, areas of interest, and a college major.

This particular group of Hmong college students, despite financial constraints, came to College 1 via the encouragement and support of Hmong Christian camp

counselors, church scholarships to attend CMA colleges, and College 1 funds earmarked for Hmong students. All those responsible for paving participants' way to College 1 were often College 1 alumni. Several participants with part-time jobs used their pay for spending money, books as well as supplies, and to help their parents with bills. Recruiters, the College 1 Hmong Fellowship advisor, and caring faculty and administrators encouraged Hmong high school students to apply to College 1 in order to reach for the American Dream.

### Participant Profiles

#### *Overview of Participant Characteristics*

All informants met the criteria for participating in the study. The eligibility criteria included the following: (a) parents were both Hmong (Laotian-preferred but not mandatory), (b) over age 18, (c) currently enrolled as a college junior or senior, and (d) English-speaking fluency. All the participants in this study were college seniors and belonged to a cohesive Hmong community represented by the Hmong Student Fellowship (HSF) membership whose demographic data are illustrated in Tables 4 and 5.

All six interviewees were from the same Asian race and Hmong Laotian ethnicity except for factors related to Hmong U.S.-born generation and U.S. region of residence. The research design called for college upper-classmen and (women). The six interviewees in April 2014 were seniors who were scheduled to graduate two weeks after data collection ended.

Of the six participants, five were females and one was male. Five of the participants attended College 1, and one female participant attended College 2, a small denominational college in the Southeast region of the country. At the time of the interviews, five of the six participants were scheduled to graduate in May 2014. Due to the voice major's five-year program, she was scheduled to graduate in 2015. The median age was 24, and participants were representative of the first and second generation Hmong. Four of the five were employed either full time or part time. Although none of the six participants were married or parents, two indicated they were single, and four were in committed relationships.

Table 4

*Participant Demographic Characteristics: Self-reported Survey*

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Marital Status	Hmong U.S-born	Employment Status	College 1 or 2
Adele	F	Hmong Laos	24	Single	Yes	Part time	1
Alicia	F	Hmong Laos	24	Committed Relationship	Yes	Part time	2
John	M	Hmong Laos	25	Single	Yes	Part time	1
Rihanna	F	Hmong Laos	22	Committed Relationship	Yes	Part time	1
Selena	F	Hmong Laos	26	Committed Relationship	Yes	Part time	1
Taylor	F	Hmong Laos	22	Committed Relationship	Yes	Not employed	1

Table 5

*Participant Demographics: U.S. Generation, Permanent Resident, and College Major*

Participant Pseudonym	Interview #	Major	Area of Interest	U.S. Generation	Country of Migration	Permanent Residence
John	1	Counseling Psychology	At-Risk Adolescence	2nd	Laos	Sacramento, CA
Alicia	6	Health Science	Physical Therapy	1st	Laos	Providence, RI
Adele	5	Music	Voice	1st	Laos	St. Paul, MN
Rihanna	4	Cross Cultural Studies	Cross Cultural Studies	1st	Laos	Fresno, CA
Selena	3	Cross Cultural Business Administration	Business	2nd	Laos	DeKalb, GA
Taylor	2	Counseling Psychology	Crisis & Trauma	2nd	Laos	Fresno, CA

Narratives of the Participants

*Interview 1: John Mayer (JM)*

. . . there was no. . . connection with other students unless you initiated it. (John Mayer Interview 1, p. 14, Line 320-321). My. . . advice is initiate. I was scared to initiate. It was a limiting factor. . . (p. 19, Ln 424-425, 438)

My first participant for the day was John Mayer who arrived at eight o'clock on the morning before classes ended for the Easter break. John was focused on completing forms and eager to start the interview. John is a Hmong college senior, age 25, with a tall and lanky appearance. When he spoke, his voice was deep with fuzzy enunciation and a slight hint of an accent. He was dressed simply in black pants and a white collared shirt, John displayed an introspective, shy, and guarded demeanor. John Mayer originated



from a large Hmong enclave in Sacramento. He is a US born first-generation Hmong, whose grandparents are Hmong immigrants from Laos. John is a middle child, the fifth of nine siblings (six brothers and two sisters); his younger siblings turn to him for advice. Of his other seven siblings, a few are in college, but John is the first in his family to earn a bachelor's degree.

In regard to the purpose of my qualitative research, John's account of how he viewed his earlier college years was significant as he was my only male participant. He contextualized his experiences from the perspective of his parents, siblings, and community. Although I had five female participants, I was glad to have responses to the protocol from a male perspective. John was my first participant for the day, and his lower-grade-level college experience addressed gender differences that provided an emic understanding of his lower grade level and upper grade level differences in sense of university belongingness in a community college and that of his transfer in his junior year to a four-year college experience.

Back home, John attended a Christian church and turned to his pastor for emotional and social guidance during his difficult times in school or at work. John maintained his pastoral relationship and sought his pastor for guidance beyond that of his parents. His pastor influenced him to attend college in Georgia for the second half of his college experience, despite his parents' residence in California. "My first year college, [I had] no clue [about] what...to go into" (John Mayer Interview 1, p. 9, Ln 186). It was a positive sign for John to begin a network of adult, non-parental advisors in his transition to college, especially a small Christian one in Georgia.

During his freshman year, John pursued sports medicine, ultimately planning a career as a PE teacher. After his first year, John realized that he wanted to change his academic focus to human physiology, more specifically, kinesiology (the physicality of sports). John did maintain a close long distance relationship with the pastor from his home church in Sacramento. The pastor advised him to attend to find direction in his life and challenged John to develop his potential more than he had in his previous college. Upon transferring with his AA degree, John decided to switch his academic major from kinesiology to psychology-counseling. John expressed a fascination with psychology, mental health, and counseling that he said were non-existent in Hmong culture, and that his family was no different. When asked to prioritize the top three things that motivated him to get a college degree his three sources of motivation were (a) his family upbringing and Hmong identity, (b) his desire to please his father, and (c) the distinction of being the first college graduate in the family. “I have projects individually and projects with others. I tend to... excel more with projects, individually” (John Mayer Interview 1, p.13, lines 299-300).

Academically, John was challenged in writing papers and longer complex writing exercises took him more time to complete than the average college student. John preferred to work alone on his portion of the work that was independent of team. He recalled that while at the community college, he did not want “to be in charge” but just “to do his part” in team projects. If needed, he confessed that he “slackened off” in meeting homework commitments. As a commuter student, Community College represented a time of isolation from professors and other students. He attested to the

isolation he felt at his community college commuter campus where “there was no kind of connection with other(s). . .” (John Mayer-Interview 1, p. 14, Line 320). Combined with his father’s upbringing of “backing down” when threatened or challenged, it was cultural for John not to get involved in situations with consequences...“Everyone had their own group and therefore any sense of interaction or belonging...there was no sense of interaction or belonging. . .(p. 15, Line 345-346). (Not knowing) how...to get to the American Dream.” (John Mayer Interview 1, p. 31, Line 345-346).

At the end of senior year, John attested to his father’s dream to go to college with confirmation that the benefits “would open higher career options and paying jobs.” As a second generation Hmong who was prodded by his father to attend college, John had no idea how to singlehandedly carve out and navigate a path to the American Dream. He compared his uneducated parent’s inability to guide him the way his third and fourth generation Hmong friends with educated parents or grandparents guided them, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that he did it by himself.

#### *Interview 2: Taylor Swift (TS)*

I think that it’s my parents are more traditional even though I’m second generation. My parents raised me in. . . knowing our culture and. . . heritage. (Taylor-Interview 2, p. 33, Line 748)

Taylor is a 22-year-old college senior. Unlike the other five participants, she is the third born of eight children. Her permanent residence is Fresno, CA, her birthplace, but she sees her first culture as Hmong not American. She attended College 1 for four years and declared a major in counseling psychology focused on crisis and trauma.

When asked to describe her sense of school pride in College 1 and its Hmong community, Taylor believed the lower level cohort of Hmong students influenced her the most. “I think I do have a big college pride because I recently have learned how to love my fellow Hmong students” (Taylor-Interview 2, p. 33, lines 762-763).

The other contributing factor came from the College 1 Admissions Office call to her to assist her through the application process.

[For me] the biggest things will be the classes that I took for my major. . . and be[ing] a resident assistant. Developed me as a leader, opened doorways . . . with relationships (that) are going to ... being able to do life with them. (Taylor-Interview 2, p. 36, line 736)

Taylor’s family was in Georgia where she attended the first two years at a community college two-year program to learn accounting. Even though accounting was not her first choice, her obedience to her family influenced her decision to work in accounting full-time while attending school full-time. When asked to pinpoint the most memorable community college experiences, Taylor stated the courses for her major and her role of resident assistant (RA) stood out in her memory.

My faith definitely helped knowing that I would get through all these struggles and challenges. . . and that having people who cared in addition to my parents, their motivation and encouragement, knowing where they were at definitely helped a lot. (Taylor-Interview 2, p. 37, line 855)

Taylor had learned to integrate faith and beliefs as a way to overcome obstacles. Knowing that she had her parents’ support and 24/7 hour availability during those times was an encouragement. In retrospect, if Taylor could repeat her freshman and sophomore years, she indicated she would have focused more on academics. Taylor confirmed that her decision to attend college was worth it. “A lot of the Hmong students [who] are

second generation . . . the majority of the parents are non-educated. So academically, college is harder for them because they don't come from an educated background. . .” (Taylor-Interview 2, pp. 38-39, lines 883-884).

Taylor mentioned that her struggles and challenges could have been avoided if she had focused on academics sooner than she did. She said that focusing on social issues was not as important as academics. If she had an opportunity, Taylor emphasized, that is how she would advise entering Hmong freshmen.

*Interview 3: Selena Gomez (SG)*

Freshman and sophomore year. . . I was. . . introverted. . . If they don't [sic] approach me, ask me, or anything, I wouldn't take the initiative to express it outward[ly]. (Selena-Interview 3, p. 47, lines 1106, 1111-1113)

The second interview was with my oldest participant Selena, age 26, born in DeKalb, before moving to Gwinnett, Georgia. She worked and attended school full-time. Prior to transferring to her four-year college, Selena worked full-time, attended a two-year technical community college, and earned an associate's (AA) degree over four-years. Similar to John, Selena transferred from a non-sectarian school where Hmong were sparse. Selena's demeanor was professional and confident. “When I came here, I didn't want to have anything to do with Hmong. . .I wanted to get out from my culture. . . explore a regular church or like different denominations” (Selena-Interview 3, pp. 48-49, lines 1102-1103).

Prior to attending her present college, Selena had non-Hmong classmates at her large commuter community college, and there was a scarcity of Hmong student on this non-denominational campus. When she arrived at the smaller, denominational campus in

her junior year, Selena saw a large contingency of Hmong, but this was not something she was used to nor did she have interest in associating with other Hmong. Selena said that when she went outside of the Hmong community to seek acceptance at a local Caucasian church, she did not feel like she belonged there after attending for several weeks. No one invited her socially outside of Sunday or the church building. She felt the congregation's looks from afar and its' disinterest in her, her ethnicity, and her spiritual makeup. Selena confessed that she did nothing to befriend members of the new church. She admitted she did not handle her Hmong and non-Hmong relationships appropriately and realized she missed the Hmong college community and her Hmong church relationships. This past year, after her non-Hmong church experience, Selena said she was closer with the Hmong college community.

I was working full-time. Each semester I could only take one or two classes. After this (graduation). Gonna go find a job. . . in my current part-time job. My fiancé studies here as a pastor. In the next three years, we're going to pay off at least half of our loans ...get into a Hmong church...go on a short-term mission trip. (Selena-Interview 3, p. 28, lines 641, 645, 659, 661, 664)

When asked if she was applying to graduate school or whether finding a good job in her college discipline was in her plans after she graduated, she indicated she had decided to earn money immediately. In the process of finding independence, Selena got engaged to a Hmong student who was studying to become a pastor; so marriage was in the near future. During the interview, when asked what advice she would give a lower grade level Hmong student, Selena thought carefully and replied that she would develop relationships with Hmong and non-Hmong in the freshman year,

I think we are not just reaching out to the Hmong people...we are still deeply rooted in just reaching out to...Hmong people. The second generation, they're

moving away from. . . traditional. . . they're more outgoing in the community [at-large]. . . right now. . . we're still deeply rooted in reaching out to [the Hmong]. (Selena-Interview 3, p. 41, Line 935- 940)

In keeping with Hmong tradition, we discussed her four siblings and practiced the proper pronunciation of their names. Her last sibling, unlike the first few, was named Wendy, which was non-Hmong and Selena referred to it as a “normal” name. Selena is a pseudonym used to conceal her Hmong name to protect confidentiality.

In a way, it's also my fault. Didn't reach out as I should have. I realize[d] I . . . missed my Hmong culture and people. I . . .got back into a local church...and [realized] I didn't respect the Hmong relationships I[had]. (Selena-Interview 3, pp. 48-49, Line 1106-1108)

Her tone of voice in her interview responses conveyed her need to break away from Hmong culture to venture out into Christian denominations that were either racially diverse or with a Caucasian majority. After several visits, Selena experienced only superficial greetings from church-goers who never spent time with her or invited her to join their congregation. Experiencing racism, rejection, and isolation by Christian Baptists in Georgia drove Selena back to the Hmong community on campus and the local Hmong church to find belongingness and self-identity. For the first time it explained why Selena's self-identity saw Christian faith as a means to an end in belonging within “small town America” Caucasian majority. She sought acceptance outside of campus and the college Hmong community.

*Interview 4: Rihanna (R)*

Ahm, I think my feeling about belonging in the classroom would be based on the individual [not Hmong]. . . there are some Hmong students who really break out of the Hmong mold and are accepted as friends with everyone. If they know. . . people are going to feel more comfortable in the classroom as well as with. . . teachers and for those who are still not up to bridge out [reach out], they don't feel so comfortable to speak up in class or [are] reserved in class. (Rihanna--Interview 4, p. 9, 226-231)

Rihanna, age 22 was leaving for Easter holidays after the interview, but her garrulous nature gave the impression that she enjoyed the participatory nature of research. She was a graduating senior upon successfully passing final exams. During her freshman year, Rihanna bonded with her roommates, and that became an impetus to motivate her to take new courses, work hard, face her vulnerability and involvement, and learn on her own how to balance studying and socializing by the last two years of her college experience. Rihanna eventually was attracted to students who struggled with the same issues as she did and not because they were academically superior.

The first two years was a lot of learning the hard way. I was able to pass some advice to. . . other classmates. . . focus on this area of school work. . . on academics rather than social life. Little things like that... my roommates and suitemates. . . seeing them do well. . . seeing them struggle with essays and projects. . . we could struggle together. (Rihanna--Interview 4, p. 3, Line 58-61, 65-67).

Her Hmong cohort became a set of influential relationships, and her open and caring faculty cared about her progress in course selection and homework assistance. The lower grade level years of living on campus were the "seek and find" years. Stepping outside of her parents' home and the Hmong community was new, but while she worked through it, she gained independence and was attracted to cross-cultural



studies as an area of interest. She eventually committed to pursue her area of interest as her declared major in the baccalaureate degree program at her college.

Rihanna learned about the pros and cons of working in groups rather than solo. After a while, she noticed her best work happened when the best place to work was in her own room away from the social aspects of group study.

If we. . . wanted to get something done, we could finish within 2-3 hours in our own rooms, with doing our own work [alone]. But. . . groups work is in the library. . . where everybody wants to hang out. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 4, Line 105-108)

When asked about the welcoming customs for diverse student cultures, Rihanna expressed the linkages that led her to her decision to major in cross cultural studies. Primarily, by attending a missionary college and meeting students and professors who lived around the world or who were natives of other countries, Rihanna developed a penchant for opportunities for exposure to her non-U.S. counterpart. “[In] a cross-cultural department, our professors have been missionaries for 15+ years. . . in a different culture. . . overseas [and] know what it feels like to not feel they belong [and] they’re not wanted in the culture” (Rihanna-Interview 4, pp. 5-6, Line 119-120, 126-128).

Although shy, she experienced immediate bonding with her roommates, suite mates, and friends. Rihanna faced multiple struggles during the transition. She acknowledged that her shy personality prevented her from initiating relationships with faculty and other students. In her lower level classes, she felt awkward having faculty relationships outside of the classroom. It was not until her junior year that she pursued the benefits of initiating faculty mentorships. Rihanna asked faculty to mentor her, and she noticed the mentoring helped increase her sense of belongingness and her willingness

to trust an adult other than her parents or those outside of her Hmong community. “My advisor . . . helps me get through academic problems...Throughout the four years I know all the professors [that] made me feel a little more that I belong” (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 16, Ln 391-393). “I know the professors now; it’s like I . . .could identify with my other classmates” (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 16, Line 389, 391-393, 399-400).

Rihanna admitted her reluctance to create a mentoring relationship with her academic instructors, or authority figures. Her faculty friendships were positive, and that prompted Rihanna to express an increasing sense of belongingness and therefore more self-confidence, increased self-esteem, and a better self-concept. “I could identify with them now. . .I was really meek and didn’t know if I could identify with. . .Caucasian(s), but because they had that level of relationship that I never saw before” (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 16, Line 396-398).

For the first time after leaving home and family, she began to thrive in her arrival at the college, joining the Hmong student fellowship group and attending new classes with new faculty. Rihanna decided to work part-time to reduce the burden on her hard-working parents to provide money to her over her siblings still living at home. Initiating ways to find income sources was a sign of growth and independence. By her senior year, she had learned how to balance the challenge of enrollment in more classes than required, and it helped to have other Hmong classmates work part-time. She also learned the importance of platonic friendships. “I hung out with a certain group of male cohorts. . .it wasn’t romantic. . . we had such good fellowship. It was the first time I felt that I

belonged. . . my finest memories. I clung to them” (Rihanna-Interview 4, pp. 24, line 576, 587-588).

Rihanna was no different than the other participants who mentioned their father or parents as the main reason to attend college, to do well, and to come home when her needs were not met through campus relationships. Rihanna was no different and expressed it, emphatically.

[White students are] not sure how to ask questions so that we’re not offended . . . especially Caucasians. . . yeah, especially Caucasians. We are in the South [that has a] history of being racist. Pastors ask. . . questions, and . . . say, “I hope this doesn’t offend you, but. . .” I would say, “That’s fine. No, it doesn’t apply to me so I’m not offended”. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 6, line 142, 144, 147-148)

Rihanna echoed the sentiments of the other participants that Hmong students feel obliged to follow parental preferences. Hmong students, regardless of gender, conveyed that they place great importance on pleasing their uneducated parents, especially their fathers, who did not have a basic K-12 formal education. Rihanna stated that the first generation college Hmong student was often encouraged to succeed in college by parents’ encouragement and support. “They [my parents]. . . give me . . . encouragement when I need it. . . They let me know. . . it’s going to be ok” (Rihanna-Interview 4,-p. 7, Ln 161-162). Parental support provided Rihanna with the first and often the only form of an external support system.

*Interview 5: Adele (AD)*

For the [Hmong] woman they're going to become a different part of the lineage, a different . . . they're [parents] a . . . bit more, "We don't want you guys to go to school". (Adele-Interview 5, p. 10, line, 216-218)

Before attending this college, Adele, age 24, and her three brothers lived in Georgia and Minnesota. This was a common trek for Hmong to live in urban enclaves, most notably St. Paul, and move to the east coast for farming opportunities.

I would characterize Adele as extroverted, effervescent, and positively upbeat. She not only exuded confidence but a sincere interest in listening and helping anyone who needed a friend to talk to. Unfortunately during her lower grade level, Adele did not balance the time spent with friends with the time spent learning, studying, and nurturing academics. When Adele withdrew at the end of fall term, she had a strong sense of belonging with support extended from faculty, students, and administrators. Adele returned to the campus bolstered with academic resources and faculty tutoring support to improve her grades. After the school reached out to her, Adele showed a new self-confidence and sense of self-esteem that suppressed any sense of shyness or timidity to campus entities. She is a full time student and a part-time employee. Due to her music major, she will graduate from the five-year voice program in 2015, unlike her fellow interviewees who were scheduled to graduate soon after their interviews.

Adele proudly reported her father's education as a high school graduate and no schooling for her mother. In spite of that, her parents influenced her to major in health science with a physical therapy focus. Adele is a first generation Hmong student. She shared that Hmong women in Hmong culture feel they are disrespected and do not belong

in their families because the father places a higher priority on the son than the daughter. Hmong sons were educated because they were heirs, and daughters were seen as “different.” Earlier generations of females were discouraged from attending college because when they married, they left their birth clan, and joined their husband’s clan.

Adele felt pressured by her academics, especially as the first female in the family to ever attend college. When she did poorly in her grades “they [her parents] were really sad.” (Adele-Interview 5, p. 8, Line 200) Despite their disappointment, Adele’s parents continued to motivate her to improve and to at least get her BA because they did not have that opportunity. Adele wanted to do better to leave a legacy for the family history.

My parents really encouraged . . . and motivated me during . . . my first two years. I was the first girl in our whole family to be in college. . . When they heard. . . I was doing poorly they were sad but. . . kept motivating me to do better and. . . at least get my B.A. . . . because they never got a chance to. So that motivated me. My family, I can achieve something that can be a part of our family history. (Adele-Interview 5, pp. 8-10, Line 197-100, 203-204)

When asked if there were special programs in the college to welcome diverse or non-Caucasian students, Adele enumerated relative ethnic clubs and groups similar to the Hmong Student Fellowship.

We have different clubs and groups. . . we come in and we hear about it, and so...Hmong Student Fellowship. And then. . . different minority groups come in, we have the Hispanic club now. . . and the African American club--they would take care of Black awareness month (Adele-Interview 5, p. 16, Line 335-336, 342-344).

At the start of school in the fall, all students were invited by the college to attend a required meeting to learn about all groups that identify with marginalized students. She also mentioned events and traditions sponsored by the club and college. Hispanic students had a campus-wide Hispanic Worship Night that’s open to all students. The

Hmong host an annual spring tour to different churches and schools in their denomination to recruit for her college. “I think it’s. . . our culture. . . stood out and ‘People liking that you guys are unique. We want to learn more about what’s Hmong.’” (Adele-Interview 5, p. 4, Line 91-92). Several Caucasian students assist with recruitment and revival on Hmong Spring tours. Adele made it clear that students of color were part of the campus family, of Christian norms, beliefs, faith, and have opportunities to share their heritage with the rest of the college community.

Unlike John, Adele was extroverted and enjoyed homework assignments that were team projects and joint assignments. She preferred being part of a team where everyone in the group knows that she is “in charge” of one piece of work that she contributes.

Group projects, I love it more because I get to be with people and plan with people. . . and so that helps me as well to give up my part and do my part because I have to be told [what] I’m in charge of. But the ones when I have to do it myself (sighs). (Adele-Interview 5, p. 12, Line 301-304)

Adele found academic support at the Academic Success Center. The Center kept students on track and developed a study plan for exams and homework for Adele that helped restore her status and put her in good standing with the college.

*Interview 6: Alicia Keyes (A)*

[I was born in Rhode Island]. . . but I lived there when I was. . . young. I was here for the first two years. . . college experience [And plan on] graduating [from this campus on] May 1, [2014]. I’m single. . . in a committed relationship. My parents led me to. . . a. . . health science major. . . in physical therapy. I’m first generation Hmong. . . my parents are from another country. Every term I take 9 to 14 credits. . . Courses are. . . three or four [credits]. I have brothers and sisters. All. . . went [to college]. . . three. . . four of them. . . only two. . . finished. . . time.

. . my friendships are outside the university. (Alicia-Interview 6, pp. 2-3, Line 34, 42, 46-47, 49, 53-54, 56, 72, 74, 79-81)

Alicia, age 24, was a graduating senior at a state university in Florida. She had a health science major with an interest in physical therapy. This interview was conducted at the Starbuck's across the street from the main campus on a Saturday morning, per Alicia's request. When I arrived, she was waiting for me at an outside table wearing glasses and talking on her cell phone. Once we greeted, we moved inside Starbucks and found a table for the interview so as to plug into an outlet to record the interview. The interview started with a review of her demographic survey responses. Alicia told me she was graduating one week after this interview. I was eager to know more about Alicia because she was the first Hmong New Englander I had met, and I wondered about the commonalities and differences between Hmong students from large Hmong enclaves in California and the Mid-West.

In comparison to upper versus lower grade levels, Alicia found it difficult to adjust to college life the first two years, but noticed a turning point while her self-awareness and maturity developed.

For the first two years, it was definitely hard trying to adjust to college life. . . [As] I got older. . . [it got] easier to. . . start learning more about yourself,. . . how to be independent, take care of yourself. . .[and] adjust to how college life should be. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 5, line 122-123, 125-126)

During freshman and sophomore years, the top three motivators that helped Alicia reach educational attainment were three family members; her parents, sister-in-law, and middle brother. Her hard-working immigrant parents didn't want Alicia to just "get by." They wanted to her to have essentials, pay bills, and buy a house, which was a sign of

success. Her college- educated sister-in-law was her role model and accountability person, who she tried to emulate. She experienced a sense of belongingness.

[My parents] work really, really hard. . . just to get by and they love for me. . . but they can do enough to get by. They don't really want that for me. It's tough to see. So that's something that motivated me. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 6, line 148-150)

So my sister-in-law . . . went to college, got her degree, got a job, a career, and four children. She definitely motivated me to "do something with my life". . . to be not just like her, but be better. . . having a house over your head. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 8, line 165-167)

Her other motivator was her middle brother who withdrew from college but encouraged her to do well in school. "Teng (her brother) actually went to university [nearby]...and... withdrew. He's actually gone back to school...not a four-year but a [community college]" Alicia-Interview 6, p.17, Line 463-465).

Hmong way to go to college is attend two years community and. . . two [more] years. . . it's a lot cheaper. It's. . . a learning process. My family is from Laos. . . so. . . being immigrants here, they're still learning about America. It's new here. . . I guess it's their children so they're still hesitant to let them go. It's very hard to let. . . go. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 10, line 263-265, 271-272, 274, 279, 282)

Alicia informed me that most Hmong prefer to attend a 2 year community and a 2-year BA College, which varied from John's preference for a straight 4-year BA experience, without a Community College prelude. Alicia remembered that there had been a Hmong male student withdrew for personal reasons, returned home, and enrolled in community college.

I would advise incoming Hmong to interact. . . with people. Don't wait for someone to tell you to go out. . . . As we've grown here, we're learning to be more assertive. [Hmong are] patient people who let a lot of things go. I didn't really know how to be assertive or take initiative until I got here. (Alicia-Interview 6, pp. 21-22, line 526, 532, 538-539)



Alicia gave an account of her daily routine during her freshman year as to class, home, and homework, indicating she had no friends or social life. That changed in her sophomore year. “. . . when I . . . stopped going home, . . . I realized I’m here for a purpose. . . to better myself . . . I stopped going home, . . . got involved . . . that’s when I realized. . . I can do it” (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 31, line 869-871). In her sophomore year, Alicia decided to join a sorority to belong to a campus family and described her pledging process of becoming a “sister” to other women and how it changed her campus identity. Alicia described the sorority pledging process that helped her “open up” feelings and shared experiences. She went on to enumerate other examples of how she found her independence through increased campus involvement in activities, meeting new friends, received academic help, and did better in school, and learned the benefits of befriending professors for mentorship. Her parents gave her a car to go back and forth between home and campus on weekends. Once Alicia started a part time job in her sophomore year, she said that independence came in the process of balancing activities and finances.

### Summary

Included in this chapter were the presentation and exploration of the reflections of six Hmong college seniors who shared their lived college experience while in their final years as undergraduate students. Excerpts were taken from each participant’s transcription and paired with narratives written from interviewer observations. The issues discussed related to participants’ sense of belonging in their campus social and academic roles. They also related those experiences to reaching the American Dream.

Narratives contained participants' reflections of college-related incidents or issues in the interview protocol that portrayed the dynamics of challenges from different generations of Hmong college students and parents. Participants were expected to articulate their personal encounters to the protocol responses. The profiles included researcher observations of the physical qualities and recollections of Hmong student upper and lower grade levels.

Chapter 6 contains the results of the data analysis. The results are reported using a content matrix structure to categorize, cluster and derive themes and respective descriptions.

## CHAPTER 6 PARADOXES, GIFTS, AND OTHER SURPRISES

Tomorrow is longer than yesterday and I believe in it. I need to prepare for my future. I have seen my present life situation. . . and I need a better one. To have one is to get a college education. – Hmong Proverb (Vang, 2001, p. 74)

### Introduction

This chapter contains a report of the analysis of the data. The research questions in this study were designed to explore, using the interview protocol, the lived experiences of Hmong college juniors and seniors. The results of this process created a rich narrative of perceptions of the college trials experienced by Hmong College students. The protocol enabled the creation of personal stories from participant social and academic encounters. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe, within the realm of belongingness, the perceptions according to Hmong juniors and seniors and their trials in attaining the baccalaureate degree and the American Dream standard of excellence.

Data gathered from the survey and interviews have been used to explore the relationship to the university sense of belongingness (UNSB) using a three-stage process (Freeman et al., 2007).

Four themes materialized from the data analyses that are detailed in this chapter. The emergent themes were: (a) the armor of university belongingness (UNSB), (b) heritage identity and the American Dream future, (c) garnering resources, and (d) academic seduction.

### The Process of Theme Generation

Once the interviews were transcribed, I analyzed, massaged, and triangulated the data. The Moustakas (1994) model for data analysis had steps to create themes. I developed a data content matrix (Appendix I) that represents the top five categories most frequently mentioned by each participant. The content matrix was color-coded to facilitate a visual aspect to the process of data scrutiny. I combed through the transcriptions repeatedly, listened to the audio recordings, especially the member checking for mention of words, phrases, or synonyms of the category name that depicted a genuine image of the participant accounts. After the interviews, I chose a self-created data analysis process for data management for using with the following steps:

1. Transcribed interviews and developed a data entry Excel spreadsheet with the written survey responses--the first column was the list of keywords that converted to organize the answers from the survey.
2. Listed the keywords that corresponded to categories, i.e., my “visual buckets” of data.
3. Recorded tallies--I reread the transcripts to use MS-WORD to highlight sections that match the category color in the content matrix.
4. Tracked mention of the category by line number for each transcript.
5. Ranked top seven categories, by frequency, for each participant--the categories with identical rankings were both included, which led to some participants having more than five categories.

6. Extracted three categorical buckets that were determined to be irrelevant to the protocol, i.e., literature review constructs, research question constructs,
7. Ranked categories by frequency of appearance in all transcripts combined.
8. Formed clusters by totaling the number of mention of category.
9. Produced nine ranked clusters--generated four themes by grouping clusters together according to major constructs contained in the research questions.

#### *Data Analysis of the Transcripts*

Once data collection ended, time was dedicated to the development of supportive graphic documentation of providing visual explanations of the two-step-wise logic flow behind massaging the data start to finish. The embryonic step was to collect a list of pertinent topics derived from the research questions, American Dream construct, and theoretical framework to trigger recognition of participant data references. A few words of description of the origins and outcomes of the epoche methods process and data analysis resulted in the emergent themes espoused by subdivisions of the topics (Moustakas, 1994). The neutralizing approach taken led to bracketing or ridding the researcher of personal biases, memories, and prior knowledge of the participants' background, and protocol responses prepared the interviewer's mindset in stages.

My approach began with a subdivision of the three research questions to find multiple keywords. For example, the third research question examined the American Dream construct which guided the thematic process method used to conduct my research. This consisted of the phenomenological content analysis of 12 hours of audio-recorded

data for the six interviews that underwent a conversion of textual structures of over 270 pages of transcripts (Grbich, 2007). I divided my analysis into three stages. The first stage of the process was enumerative and included elements of word frequencies and contextual keywords. The process was phenomenological inquiry interviews from which I formed a set of commonalities of the Hmong lived-experience to identify the existence and quality of belongingness.

Each of the keyword categories flowed from the research questions, theoretical model, The American Dream, and Hmong Heritage topics, just to name a few. The American Dream diagram was placed at the end of each transcript, with a matrix of three columns, six rows of major keywords, and their respective sub-keywords. For example, a color coded matrix (Appendix I) was located after the text on the last page of each transcription. A component of the graphic started on the top row of the participant column labels or cell that intersected for each categorical keyword. Once the matrix structure was formed, the data for each person was color-coded for keywords or phrases. Each of the keyword categories flowed from the research questions, theoretical model, The American Dream, and Hmong Heritage topics, just to name a few. The American Dream diagram was placed at the end of each transcript, with a matrix of three columns, six rows of major keywords, and their respective sub-keywords. A color coded matrix was located after the text on the last page of each transcription. A component of the graphic started on the top row of the participant column labels or cell that intersected for each categorical keyword. Once the matrix structure was formed, the data for each person was color-coded for keywords or phrases.

My emergent themes came from the first stage that listed keyword categories. I derived name-labels for each major grouping or category of keyword concepts in Chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation. The second step was to reduce the categories by removing three dissertation related categories, i.e., the literature review and research questions, leaving 14 categories. At this point, a second category reduction occurred by aggregating the key words of the six participants and ranking them by the most often quoted protocol responses. The 14 categories were grouped into nine clusters which yielded four major themes from participants' transcribed interviews. Appendix J contains a graphic display of the emergent methods process when the categories (Stage 1) convert into clusters (Stage 2) through tabulated references that started with grouping measurable units of data and ended with the final themes that emerged from the data collected in the study. Appendix K contains the products associated with the data tallies of the reductions of categories to clusters.

Discussion of Thematic Outcomes

Table 6 illustrates the relationship between the research questions which guided the study and the four emergent themes.

Table 6

*Relationship of Emergent Themes to Research Questions*

Emergent Themes	Research Question
1. Heritage Identity and the American Dream Future	1. How do U. S. Hmong college students perceive and describe their lived experiences during their college career?
3. Garnering Resources	
2. The Armor of University Belongingness (UNSB)	2. How do U. S. Hmong college students understand their sense of university belongingness?
3. Garnering Resources	
1. Heritage Identity and the American Dream Future	3. How do U. S. Hmong students perceive how earning a baccalaureate prepares them to participate in the American Dream?
4. Academic Seduction	

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Research Question 1 was linked to the theme of Heritage Identity and the American Dream as well as the theme of garnering resources. Research Question 2 was addressed, in part, by two themes: the Armor of University Belongingness and Garnering Resources. Academic Seduction theme, along with Heritage Identity and the American Dream Future themes, pertained to Research Question 3.



*Theme 1: Heritage Identity and the American Dream Future*

How do U. S. Hmong college students perceive and describe their lived experiences during their college career? The design of Research Question 1 sought to expose issues related to the lived experiences and felt academic and social needs of fourth-year Hmong college students. Two themes surfaced which together addressed this question: (1) heritage identity and (2) American Dream future.

In college, academic and social integration are critical expectations; students seek respect and acceptance in all channels of the university network. Ideally, Hmong college students wish to belong in the university setting, with all of the advantages belongingness brings, while at the same time remaining genuine to their Hmong heritage. The Hmong Student Fellowship at College 1 is an established community that has influenced Hmong students, i.e., the study participants, at the institution. Participation in this community has influenced participants' lived experiences including their felt spiritual and heritage needs.

“Well the Hmong Fellowship. . .they were definitely the first ones to welcome us” (Rihanna-Interview 4, p.16, Line 381). Rihanna was one of the participating seniors at College 1 in this study. In her interview, she shared her reflections on Hmong traditions and the identity of Hmong college students, who feel obliged to follow parental preferences. A Hmong college student, who is both a first generation college student in the family as well as a first generation American-born Hmong, is often encouraged to succeed by parents who do not have a basic K-12 formal education. This was not the case for Rihanna whose parents encouraged her to pursue a college education. “I came

here because of my dad. My dad is an alumnus [us]. I know some of my classmates have come here because of the testimony of the mother. Ahm, the [College 1] representative at our camp” (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 19, line 463).

In addition, parental support provided Rihanna with her first and only form of an external support network. This was also the case for a few of the other participants. Early in her college career, Rihanna perceived her parents’ support.

When I come very close to hitting rock bottom... my parents...say, “You know you’re in college. You’re an adult now, but we will always be here as parents to support you when stressed out or really homesick. They give...encouragement...let me know it’s going to be OK” (Rihanna-Interview 4, pp. 6-7, line 159-162).

Rihanna’s internal campus network started to develop during the first week of classes as she met other Hmong students, especially those in her cohort. Her motivation for learning was influenced by her living with other Hmong students, many of whom studied together.

Just seeing them do well in the classes work; seeing them struggle with essays and projects, it motivated me to be alongside them so that we could struggle together.. and not just “Oh well I’m perfectly fine.” You’re not doing so well. I was actually the one who didn’t do too well. I really was motivated to be at their level. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 3, line 65-69)

Rihanna had a community of Hmong on campus which generated a sense of belongingness, but she also had received cultural identification and academic outreach from faculty who were missionaries and dealt with identity and cultural interactions when they served in different mission capacities. This helped to cement Rihanna’s significance on campus. “By being in a different culture. . . they know what it feels like to not feel

they belong and. . .not wanted in the culture. They do very well in helping other students to feel welcomed, to feel comfortable” (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 5, line 126-128).

In terms of her overall sense of belongingness, Rihanna felt respected and appreciated by faculty, students, and administrators, which immediately made her feel like she belonged.

Well, my advisor he helps me get through academic problems. He helped counsel me through them. He helps me realize the things I’m doing weren’t helpful ...and he helps me identify what’s going to help me; throughout the four years. I’ve gotten to know all of them. Getting to know them has made me feel a little more that I belong. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 16, line 389-393)

My feeling about belonging in the classroom [is] based on the individual [not Hmong] because there are some Hmong students who really break out of the Hmong mold, and are accepted and friends with everyone. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p.9, line 226-228)

Rihanna went to college, not only to satisfy her parents’ wishes but to prepare through college to live “the good life.” The immigration of her parents to the US was to improve their family’s well-being for the sake of their children; they wanted them to elevate their financial and employment standing, to not have to struggle.

Based on reading the earlier literature on the history of the Hmong, I was under the impression that other Asian ethnic identities shunned the Hmong while they lived in their Asian countries and that prejudice would continue with social mingling with Hmong in the US. To the contrary, I learned in the interviews that in today’s generation, the other Asian groups share similar visions. When asked if there were tensions between other Asian groups and the Hmong, Rihanna replied,

I would say they are equally the same. And the minority of Asians, they show equality towards the Hmong people just because we're Asian. But I know that some of the other girls try to hang out with everybody. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 10, line 261-263)

Yeah. We [Hmong] think that they're [other Asians] cool. I think they think we're cool too. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p.11, line 266)

Well my advisor he helps me get through academic problems. He helped counsel me through them. He helps me realize the things I'm doing weren't helpful. . . and he helps me identify what's going to help me. . . . Throughout the four years I've gotten to know all the professors. We have four professors in the Missions department. So I've gotten to know all of them. Getting to know them has made me feel a little more that I belong. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 16, line 389- 393)

I realized that most immigrant Hmong parents want their children to go to college to have more than they had in Laos or have now. When one asks for reasons behind the “push” from parents, Hmong college children understand why their parents push. Hmong parents and children are open to academic seduction, which is the fourth theme behind their motivation to attain education. Rihanna expressed it so eloquently when she said,

I think they really don't know what it means to not have an education. I think the parents who have never gone to school push for it because they see that every other ethnicity going to college are doing better, and also when they really wanted in Laos...school was so limited and so far that only a few people could go to school. For them, going to school means that we would be getting what they didn't have. So I think a lot of Hmong parents want for their kids to get an education because they want the “better life” for them, but Hmong kids are stubborn and they don't want to come to school. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p. 7, line 166-170, 172-173)

In the literature review in Chapter 2, I described the historical background of the immigrant uneducated Hmong parents. Once read, I understood the impetus behind Hmong parents to “push.” Parents are pushing for their children to participate in the American Dream and benefit from their rights to education as American citizens. At the

same time, Hmong parents want their children equipped to overcome threats to the obliteration of their American Dream Future.

In May 2005, a representative group of 1,000 participants were asked “What does the American Dream mean to people?” The three responses that scored highest were (a) having a close family, (b) having the freedom to make decisions about your life, and (c) being able to provide for yourself and your family. In a follow-up question, the participants were asked what they believed to be the main threat to the American dream. By far, the response that scored highest was “health insurance that is too expensive,” this above the expense of college education, the quality of public schools, the loss of security in retirement, and the threat of a terrorist attack (The Feldman Group, 2005, p. 8). This paradoxical premise from ten years ago explains the validity of Hmong parental concerns (The Feldman Group, 2005).

### *Theme 2: The Armor of University Belongingness (UNSB)*

How do U. S. Hmong college students understand their sense of university belongingness? This section reinforces the use of the university sense of belongingness, the theoretical framework for complementing a cohesive Hmong collective culture. Research Question 1 sought to expose issues related to the lived experiences and felt academic and social needs of fourth-year Hmong college students. Two themes surfaced which together addressed this question: (1) heritage identity and (2) American Dream future.

The Hmong tradition has been for the Hmong to use their pride of hermitic and remote society to isolate themselves from the rest of society as a form of armor against danger. When Hmong students step outside of their cultural traditions, they can survive by exchanging armor for new traditions, i.e., college environment. In this study, the armor of university belongingness (UNSB) emerged as a shield that protects Hmong students in their new college environments; this shield mitigates the waves of academic and social challenges that can buffet a student during the difficult transition to college and the merging of new identities (college student, young adult) with the old (Hmong, child). The search for belongingness led Hmong participants to seek academic support from classmates, faculty, and others who were likely to understand their difficulties. This was the case at College 1 and the special case of Greek society at College 2. For example, participant Adele conveyed her recounts her initial sense of belongingness.

I would say the school did do their part. The teachers, professors, I'm pretty sure they were the ones that have the courses for freshmen. . . they did the part of being really inviting, and already showing that love and care, and open hours to accept freshmen here and excite them for either the course or their whole school career. I think they [faculty] were prepared to accept anyone; and so coming in, I felt really, I felt like I belonged. I felt like I had that excitement to want to learn, to grow, and get to know the professors because of many of their influences. (Adele-Interview 5, p. 2, Line 41-47)

The Caucasian students, faculty, and administrators demonstrated the types of behaviors and attitudes that inspired and encouraged Hmong students in this study. These behaviors and attitudes highlighted by participants included self-respect and acceptance of others, manifested in a willingness to provide assistance to Hmong students in areas such as academics and the social life of the college. A Hmong student opportunity to mingle at College 1, a place that supports the UNSB tenets, empowers

them to overcome social and academic barriers to inclusion and educational attainment. Rihanna gave an example of finding the support at College 1 by a faculty member who monitored her progress silently.

For example, if you were doing ok in the beginning of the semester and all of a sudden you dropped some grades, they would ask you, they would say, “What’s happening”? They would want to help you settle the matter. (Rihanna-Interview 4, p.4, Line 82-84)

Alicia’s large size campus, as well as the size of the study body, can make finding acceptance and respect quite a challenge; students from poorly recognized and understood ethnic groups such as the Hmong may struggle even more. For example, Alicia’s first year in college triggered emotions such as loneliness and isolation which contributed to poor academic performance despite having more than adequate time available to study and complete assignments. Eventually, Alicia learned that the luxury of time does not mean one will use it wisely and came to understand her need for help with her time management issues.

I mean the more you feel like you belong, you feel connected. You want to try to feel better, do better, and get better grades. . . I do believe the more you thrown [sic] yourself into a class, the more you’re interactive, you definitely learn more and get better grades. . . (Alicia-Interview 6, pp. 5-6, Ln 106-107, 113-114)

A sign of personal mental growth and maturity seen in first-generation Hmong college students occurs when the “armor” is worn to protect and sustain their tenacity until it is time to graduate. Alicia echoed this sentiment throughout her interview.

But, for the first two years, it was definitely hard trying to adjust to college life. So for example, as I got older, it was easier to do that. . .Ahm, you just start learning more about yourself; learning how to be independent. You kind of take care of yourself, so kind of adjust to how college life should be. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 6, Line 120-124)

In many cases, Hmong students enter college wearing a previously acquired armor modeled after the defensive gear worn by parents and others in the Hmong community. This armor equipped previous Hmong generations to survive in sometimes hostile environments. Eventually, for Hmong college students, this armor from childhood and adolescence is, at least temporarily, replaced by the integrative armor of university belongingness. According to Alicia, one can sense exactly when the exchange takes place. Alicia states this transformative moment so eloquently. “OK, yeah. I mean the more you feel like you belong, you feel connected. You want to try to feel better, do better, and get better grades” (Alicia-Interview 6, p.5, Line107-108).

Alicia wanted to do well and not just get by in her classes. This desire mirrors what her parents wanted for her. For Alicia and her family, “getting by” is not living in the middle class or participating in the American Dream, which was the reason for aspiring to a college education. Alicia’s parents made this point clear to her: without a college degree, her professional options would be limited and her chance to live a middle class lifestyle would be greatly jeopardized.

My parents are migrants. . . . So they work really, really hard for, for. . . . I don’t want to say downplay. . . but just to get by and they love for me, but they can do enough to get by. They don’t really want that for me. It’s tough to see. You don’t realize it at that point. So that’s something that motivated me (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 5-6, Line 143-149).

When prompted to explain what she meant by “getting by,” Alicia noted her parents’ hard life working in agriculture.

Get by--pay the bills, put the food on the table. . . the necessities of life. (12m08s). . . so having a house over your head [sign of success I am living in the American Dream]. . . the necessities. . . A lot of stress. . . a lot. They’re outside



constantly. It's very hard. . . Work hard. . . Yeah. . . he taught me how to work hard. Yeah. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 7, Line 152-153, 155, 157)

The plight of the Hmong shed light on several issues previously discussed, but it raises questions about any similarities of the Hmong student to other U. S. minorities and their needs. When asked how, in her experience, minorities in general (not solely Hmong students) were treated by the college community, She replied by saying:

I think the college did pretty well reaching out to minorities. They actually had a club on campus that had Whites in it, but they actually had a club on campus with Health Sciences. . . geared towards minorities. . . they always had flyers. . . I saw flyers about their meetings every Wednesday. Actually a lot of clubs on campus with culture. . . [Other than Hmong—there was no Hmong club, so there was more mixing with non-Hmong.]. . . and getting their degree. (Alicia-Interview 6, p.11, Line 237-240)

Notably, Taylor's comments supported Alicia's perspective, adding that the mission of the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) is to help the underserved and hopeless people in all continents with just the bare essentials.

I think they acknowledge (her word/accent) the people group because it is the CMA reaching out to others. . . missionary alliance based, they're aware of culture and reaching out to different people groups. You hear (about) interns overseas talk about different culture (s). . . having world outreach, having our diversity being a part of it as well. Having our club. . . being curious. . . wanting to know who Hmong people are or where we are from. . . whether it's the professor or the student. (Taylor-Interview 2, p. 17, line 392-399)

There are several groups at College 2 that students can join in order to foster a sense of shared identity, to experience social integration, or to nurture influential relationships with students of other ethnicities which may be unfamiliar. Ethnic clubs on college campuses are found on many, if not most, college campuses; College 2 is no exception. Alicia acknowledged the existence of this phenomenon at College 2 by naming, off the top of her head, five clubs geared towards ethnic minorities.

Ah, there's (1) CASA Chinese American Student Association. There's a lot of Asian groups. There's the (2) Korean American Students Association. There's INSA, (3) Indian Students Association. There's (4) Asian Students Association. (5) HASA, which is the Haitian Student's Association. (6) Caribbean Students Association. . . . There's a lot of Greeks. . . . There are a lot of fraternities that are geared to multicultural groups. I'm actually in an Asian American Sorority... There is couple. . . . There's Betas, SLG, African Americans. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 15, line 328, 333, 335-337)

Alicia's awareness of other underserved groups at what is a predominantly white institution (PWI) was an impressive indication of her level of assimilation, self-acceptance, and confidence. Her grasp of the differences between a club and a fraternity demonstrated her nuanced understanding of the various forms of campus social structure, i.e. the difference between a club and a Greek society.

I feel a club is where you go and you're not as attached to the club. When you're in Greek society, you're a part of something, you come together, and you're all working for a common cause; a group of people that you can all get along with. There are a lot of little things that helped me. (Alicia-Interview 6, p.16, line 345-348)

Greek societies represent a collective way for students to find members in a small and selective group that shares the same gender, traditions associated with the fraternity or sorority, as well as other attributes. For the Hmong student who is from a collective culture, joining a Greek society may serve as a collective campus family, complete with a large number of brothers or sisters. The new sorority sister or fraternity brother assumes a new identity without foregoing his Hmong cultural identity that provides the armor (UNSB) against academic and social challenges. On a college campus, wherever the Hmong student finds membership, respect, and acceptance, there is the armory of belongingness.

### *Theme 3: Garnering Resources*

Garnering resources was the third theme identified and corresponds with Research Questions 1 and 2. Research Question 1 asked, How do U. S. Hmong college students perceive and describe their lived experiences during their college career? It addressed students' abilities to find a way to interact with professors and other mentors, to tap resources to solve evolving problems and issues, and to protect their image and status among his peers. The third theme complements the first class belongingness tenet of the UNSB Model. College students experience belongingness when they perceive a sense of belongingness in a class family (Tenet 1), when professors display willingness to devote extra time with struggling students (Tenet 2), and when advisors are open, respectful (Tenet 2), and willing to modify traditions to integrate their students who have outside traditions (Tenet 3). When students recognize this level of caring, they are able to experience trust. This third theme includes two significant clusters of analysis: (a) personal, romantic, and influential relationships and (b) faculty, advisor, and mentor caring. Garnering resources was derived from the following protocol item: "Who had the most impact on your progress or your success so far?"

Research Question 2 asked participants how U. S. Hmong college students understand their sense of university belongingness. This sense of belongingness is indicative of the relationship between the perceptions of the Hmong building a campus network and the first three UNSB tenets, which are class belongingness, faculty warmth and pedagogical caring, and the university campus belongingness. Participants' responses to this question indicated where and how the identified significant individuals

were defined by the Hmong students. Alicia's comments epitomized a senior's satisfaction with finding the resources she needed to sustain her motivation.

This year. . . definitely a lot of resources out there so get involved. Don't wait for someone to tell you to go out and find someone. . . I definitely think we're less assertive. . . In general? As we've grown here, we're learning to be more assertive. . . We are learning to be more assertive. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 19, line 525-526, 530, 532, 535)

For many American-born Hmong, having the "know-how" to identify and connect with mentors or other influential people outside of Hmong circles remains a challenge; these mentors can serve as a cultural gateway, mitigating the rocky transition to a culture that values assertiveness and extroversion. Younger generations of Hmong struggle to understand the processes associated with attaining success in the US or acquiring the resources needed to compete for ownership of the American Dream. The question remains: what does it mean, culturally, to have a Hmong future inside the American Dream.

Unlike secondary school, college provides students with layers of student resources, ranging from academic support, travel abroad, medical services, and work opportunities (on and off campus), just to name a few. Colleges normally provide freshman and transfer students the most information during the first few weeks of fall term in the form of postings on online message boards as well as bulletin boards posted in central student buildings, e.g., the student union, library, and first-year orientation. Several participants found resources in the form of influential relationships, medical and counseling services, and visitor lecturers that enhanced their learning experiences. Adele

reminisced about campus staff that cared enough to help her during times of academic crisis:

The most impact, mmm. . . Like I said earlier that would have to be the Academic Success Center. [Anonymous], she's in charge of [it]. She's helped me so much. She not only helped me academic, but she also helped communicate with all the other groups, like the Financial Aid office, or the Academic Office. She helped. . . (Adele-Interview 5, p.18, line 429-432)

When participants were asked how they would advise newcomers on campus, several participants recounted some of the most difficult experiences they encountered as new students. Alicia was alone her entire freshman year and only focused on academic matters and not social, but that changed in her sophomore year when she joined an Asian Sorority. Her sorority led her to organizations and resources for academic and social engagement. Alicia became connected to social events and mentioned a College 2 campus resource that academically supports students in all disciplines.

Ah, depending on which class. . . the ones I'm taking now is taught by the actual professor, most of them are taught by TAs Like the SARC sessions at school. . . SARC is the Student Academic Research Center, so it's a building room where you can go meet up at certain times and classes, physics or chemistry. . . Yeah. . . that's nice. . . and essay sessions, it is just like mini-class to help what we're learning or what we've learned in class. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 18, line 501-502, 505-506)

Alicia, as an upper level College 2 student, had acquired a level of wisdom and maturity that was hard to earn from her earlier college years. She realized her advice was valuable, especially for Hmong underclassmen.

One of [sic] my advice is to interact with people. . . interact. . . Interact with. . . your professors; get involved in. . . get involved in your school. Do like Community Services. There are a lot of resources here at [College 2] that I did not find out about until later, so. . . later, as in later in senior year. . . this year. . . definitely a lot of resources out there so get involved. Don't wait for someone to

tell you to go out and find someone. (Alicia-Interview 6, p.19, line 519, 521-523, 525-526)

Alicia's advice is helpful for Hmong students from traditional families who are not initiators in relationships with strangers or non-Hmong. Another Hmong cultural characteristic that Alicia addressed is the tendency towards passivity. As a woman, Alicia's noted that

I definitely think we're [Hmong] less assertive. We're learning to be more assertive [instead] of "nice" [stereotype] as in very passive. Ahm, very patient people, who let a lot of things go. Yes. Like very patient people. I learned that from them. I didn't really know how to be assertive or take initiative until I got here, until as an upperclassman. (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 19, line 535,537-539)

Similar sentiments were echoed by the words of John Mayer, whose homework assignments were below par, who identified his academic challenges as stemming from his parents' parenting style and cultural socialization that rewarded passivity.

OK. I think I mean. . . I mean that. . . there was no. . . kind of connection with other students (30M53S), unless you initiated it. Ah, usually conversation. . . it's solely up to you. . . No kind of interaction with the professors, solely up to you. And so for the first two years, I sort of gone [went] to class. (Interview 1, p. 15, line 320-323)

I have projects individually and projects with others. I tend to. . . excel more with projects, individually. . . than when I was in a group or a team. Ahm. . . I don't really like to be in charge. I just like to do my part. . . so sometimes. . . I kind of slackened doing them. (Interview 1, p.13, line 299-300, 302-305)

The introverted persona of conflict aversion, fear, and shyness that is characteristic of Hmong culture makes it difficult to interact with strangers or to develop a sense of belongingness. Success in class, the attention of faculty, and university recognition demonstrates assertiveness and a competitive spirit that earns respect in the campus community.

Selena told the story of a study group she led that included a Caucasian male and an African-American. She was not sure about when or if she should have spoken up.

This statement suggests that the cause of her fear was cultural uncertainty.

So then I would, like, if I was like mean I wouldn't, like. . . it wouldn't bother me. . . because we're working with the guys now, they are not Hmong. They are black and Caucasian and so I'm more. . . I don't know I guess. . . I'm more afraid to speak up or speak out. (Interview 3, p. 26, line 596-597, 599-601)

An all-Hmong college study group is more likely to comply with an assertive Hmong leader to complete team assignments. This is because of collectivist behavioral norms to avoid conflict and bring attention to one person, even the leader. American-born Hmong are perceived and stereotyped by the public as displaying timidity, shyness, and non-competitiveness. One participant in this study, John Mayer, noted that Hmong children are reared by their elders to retreat from bullies and to not fight back. John, the only male participant, followed his father's advice but felt awkward in school when the other boys bullied him. This young Hmong man did not fight back.

My dad was always just you do the right thing. You do well in school. You do the right thing, . . . and it also means you stay out of trouble. I guess that was actually. . . back in high school . . . fights that and standing up for ourselves. . . . I guess that was actually . . . back in high school. . . fights that and standing up for ourselves. (Interview 1, p. 19, line 431-432, 434)

I probed some of John's statements to better understand how he perceived this emphasis on passivity in his upbringing now that he was nearing the end of his college career. When asked to explain the context of use of the word, initiate, he differentiated, indicating he was referring to fights rather than relationships.

Fights. . . to not initiate my choice or my interests. Yeah, not so much don't initiate as we were brought up. . . don't get into fights. . . don't get into trouble. . . trouble being, such as, ahm, not standing up for myself. I don't think not so much that he didn't want me to stand up for myself, but more of times I needed. (John-Interview 1, p.19, line 437, 440, 442-443, 445-446)

Selena, John, and Alicia identified their challenges regarding how and when to reach out to others for support, but when their confidence and self-esteem grew, they recognized a tipping point occurred concerning the value of assertiveness, competitiveness, and initiative. When these students became comfortable with their cultural identity, their achievements, and their aspirations for educational attainment, they simply found the resources they so clearly needed.

#### *Theme 4: Academic Seduction*

Academic seduction is the fourth theme that was identified. It applies to the drawbridge between the higher education journey to the American Dream which is linked directly to Research Question 3, *How do U. S. Hmong students perceive how earning a baccalaureate prepares them to participate in the American Dream?* It is the American Dream that becomes the seductress to the first-generation college immigrant family that seeks the “better life” for their children. Once a student enters the gates of college they have agreed to embark on a journey with a mission to fulfill the demands of the baccalaureate program. When seeking an alternative to “getting by,” college and the baccalaureate degree become an attractive investment of time and money to those who want to secure a better life and succeed in becoming a family legacy to empower and enable family members towards a college education. The participant interviews



established that the Hmong are highly respectful, obedient, and reverent towards their parents and proud of their heritage. Alicia saw her victory as a recipient of a bachelor's degree as a means to an end of poverty by ending the family's financial picture, achieving independence, and assuming domestic responsibility for her parents and grandmother. She stated, "My oldest brother and I were born here so we've had an opportunity to go to American public schools or high school. They definitely look to us for getting a degree" (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 14, Line 378-380). Alicia passionately expressed personal satisfaction about the value of college to her and doing it by herself. "Definitely different than being part of a club or something. . . this and that day. . . It was such an accomplishment for me because I did it. . . like I didn't do it by myself, but I did it for myself" (Alicia-Interview 6, p. 57, Line 1589-1591).

In the following statement, Alicia indicated that this was a self-initiated pursuit throughout the college process. She did this for herself and not for her sister-in-law, not for her parents, just for herself; and Alicia perceived her independent pursuit to be a significant difference.

Yes. . . Yeah. . . I don't know, 'cause this had nothing to do with my sister-in-law, nothing to with my parents. 'Cause this was a very long process. It was tough. . . I was put through a lot of obstacles. . . insensitivities, but it was definitely worth it. (Alicia-Interview 6, p.57, Line 1595-1596, 1598-1599)

Adele has a similar sense of satisfaction about earning the bachelor's degree for her Hmong community as they anticipate her return.

. . . after college and when I go back to my people, 'cause we in the Hmong community. I live in Winders; it's pretty big, in Georgia. And they're already looking for "Adele, I heard you're doing music. Hurry up and finish so that you can teach our kids how to sing. . . Or teach our kids music. . . or teach our kids basics. They are already looking forward to all of that." So, I'm waiting to

complete as well, so I can see what I can do for the Lord. (Interview 5, p. 46-47, Line 1121-1126)

The American Dream is the construct by which one can understand the process that can provide a window into the participants' perception of a bachelor's degree. The fourth theme addresses the third research question: How do U. S. Hmong students perceive how earning a baccalaureate prepares them to participate in the American Dream?

Hmong college graduates who are participants in the American Dream have come to realize their future and those of their family and children will be changed forever in their point of view on owning a college degree. The outcomes of the baccalaureate degree indicated that the risks were worth it to Hmong alumni whose investment and college choice will work for others in the Hmong community. The following list represents participants' perceptions of the benefits for them of the university sense of belongingness (UNSB) framework through the lens of the four themes which emerged in this primary research:

1. Accruing resources to overcome social and academic struggle.
2. Overcoming cultural myths and pursuit for new exposures and opportunities, and a new self-concept as successful leaders in their Hmong communities.
3. Becoming intellectually independent and in control of their future.
4. Deflating the control of shamanistic cultural thinking.
5. Replacing antiquated customs and traditions with progressive knowledge to help their community exert American-born citizen rights.
6. Solidifying their career attainment by class level and economic mobility.

7. Modeling the “before and after” benefits of the college experience.
8. Bringing new skills in counseling, health therapeutic and business to an entrepreneurial overworked Hmong society living in the outcome of stress.

Those are some of the benefits that characterize college as a gift to my participants, their families, and their future.

### Summary

In this chapter, the process by which themes were generated was explained. The themes, their relevant to the UNSB framework, the American Dream construct, and the three research questions were discussed. A content matrix was used to facilitate the analysis and the progression from categories to clusters, narrowing to the following four emergent themes.

- The Armor of University Belongingness (UNSB)
- Heritage Identity and the American Dream Future
- Garnering Resource
- Academic Seduction

Detailed discussion ensued on the themes which were individually explained using participants’ profiles and interview comments. Sub-themes were integrated into the final four major themes, thereby eliminating the need to address sub-groupings.

Specifically, participants from both colleges stated that, during transitions into college from high school or upon completing an associate’s degree, they experienced time management challenges, cultural and personal identity issues, and academic difficulties.

The three-stage data analysis utilized imaginative reduction to group the text into 14 categories before narrowing down to the nine most widely mentioned categories. Remaining categories were combined to form nine clusters, and were further reduced to four major themes. This process, created for the research, is displayed in Appendix J and was pertinent to the research goals of finding answers to the three research questions which guided the study.

## CHAPTER 7 SHY, BUT ABLE

Hmong cultural determination to arrive at the American Dream is often the goal, but chipping away at the core of weak economic resources, early education, and social ostracism creates challenges, distractions, and threats that deter the fulfillment of personal dreams to live the “better life.” (J. Daugherty, 2015)

### Introduction

This chapter is the apogee of the research that was conducted to study the lived experiences of Hmong students as they persisted until graduation across the full four years of college. This chapter has been organized to summarize the study, discuss the findings, and offer recommendations and implications for both practice and future research.

### Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted to explore the lived college experiences of Hmong students', their beliefs in how those experiences contribute to the attainment of a university degree and their eventual achievement of the American Dream (Yang, 2003). One purpose of the study was to explore how Hmong American college upperclassmen make sense of their social acceptance on campus, faculty pedagogical caring and the American Dream. I also identified key themes that contribute to improved understanding of Hmong college students' academic and social experiences and how the construct of the American Dream influences them as they pursue college degrees.

### Summary and Discussion of the Findings

The implications derived from the interviews led me to conclude that the sense of belongingness framework gave Hmong students a felt sense of importance when faculty and administrators cared and made additional attempts to tutor them outside of classroom time. This was especially true with one participant, Adele, whose academic struggles forced her to withdraw from the program. At the same time, Adele's musical talents commanded respect, acceptance, and loyalty from administrators who reached out to readmit her and rescue her by unleashing abundant academic resources. This implies that administrators, regardless of their positions of leadership, e.g., program director or dean of students, had significant influence in positively recharging a student's motivation, retention, thereby potentially lowering dropout rates of Hmong college students. From the Hmong perspective, acquiring a highly functioning student experience supports the research that the sense of belongingness to a course or class makes it easier to speak up during class participation, to become transparent and vocalize an opinion, to overcome shyness. Comments were mentioned and observed in participant reflections between lower grade levels and the more recent upper grade levels that implied an improvement in academic productivity, increased self-efficacy, and instructional affirmation.

The findings in this study confirmed that the design was appropriate to study the six participants and their collective culture but were not necessarily replicable or generalizable to other research studies. Each participant profile exceeded expectations set by the literature and the general population's point of view. The findings demonstrating that Hmong are self-directed individuals on the campus refuted the

destructive Hmong stereotypes of poverty degenerates, welfare gougers, and gang members plaguing the greater society.

This study served several purposes. It filled gaps and scarcity for primary research from first and second generation Hmong college students and higher education. This research focused on understanding the upper-level Hmong student perspectives on personal educational attainment. There were significant challenges that existed for first-year Hmong college students beyond setting goals, staying motivated, and belonging to a social network of support. For first-generation Hmong, the additional secondary resources needed for college preparedness and readiness were below par, which in turn, placed incoming freshman at a disadvantage to their college prepared and ready counterparts. The interviews tracked the participant's journey of self-awareness and behavioral changes as cultural influences waned and as social and intellectual borders expanded from new interactions with faculty, advisors, peers, and resources. The study sought to describe how the Hmong student sensed the ebb and flow experiences of belongingness, autonomy, and motivation during their college career.

During conversation with these six seniors, I captured similarities in their accounts as well as differences in generational and parental priorities. Each participant varied by geographical upbringing and parental education and skill. Therefore, I detected that what made each participant unique in their circle of belongingness was not based on a connection with stereotypical expectation.

My findings helped me fully grasp the Hmong college student's strength of character, tenacity, priority for meeting spiritual and parental preferences to overcome

home and campus family hindrances. I ascertained that they possessed attributes that overcame and influenced their personal outcomes. The Hmong transition, from familial dependency to increasing self-discovery surfaced whenever acceptance and respect in class interactions and class participation, with fellow classmates, faculty, and the campus family. When participants found their worth in the campus setting through involvement in campus organizations and activities they experienced an improved self-esteem, relevancy in academic tasks, i. e., homework, school success, and respectful interactions with others or, in other words, through the eyes of the fourth university sense of belongingness (UNSB) tenet: social acceptance

These results were not predictors of college outcomes of college preparedness or readiness, but they did reveal that the Hmong participants in this study were predisposed to tendencies to belong more easily than students from predominantly undeserved community high schools. Each Hmong student is faced with decision points that can alter outcomes reported in the aim of the research. Based on the participants' demographics, I assembled unique profiles of college students who overcame the challenges to aspire for personal, not paternal motivations. The lived experience of six Hmong college students carried a strong resemblance to each other and the plight of other reflections on their four-year college career. The participants relayed the first-hand accounts of Hmong family traditions, goals and aspirations, social and academic challenges, study habits, and relationships with their faculty, peers, and administrators.

In the data collection, there were three interviews, John's in particular, that spoke to the Hmong tendency to avoid leadership opportunities and led to following others; I



was not sure if that was a result of personality flaws. John, Selena, Rihanna, Taylor, Alicia, and Adele wanted to gain proficiency in a skill so that they would earn high wages that would lead them to personal independence. Their knowledge about what direction to take once inside the college walls in knowing their area of interest as first generation college students contrasted with the U.S. dominant education philosophy of knowing the standards, having ambition, and demonstrating leadership qualities directly and indirectly to self-promote oneself with high self-esteem and self-confidence. The findings did not imply that their culture prevented them from being outgoing, strategic, or responsible.

Two of the participants, one male and one female, encountered academic disappointment with poor performance, loss of scholarship, and inadequate personal means, which caused a one to three month absence from school before reinstatement. In freshman year, these students had issues in class with the inability to express themselves clearly and their lack of self-confidence. John, the Hmong male participant lost his self-confidence and self-esteem and did not project his personal strengths well in class discussions or interviews. Unfortunately, there were moments when the participants in this study could not see themselves fitting into the environment.

I concluded that Hmong women were more assertive, responsible, and accommodating when they banked on receiving what they paid for and were entitled to receive. The female students were more inclined to seek assistance for poor grades, if they did not understand concepts than Hmong men. I suspected that behind a mother's prodding for her daughter to get what she (the mother) wished she had was her desire to

have her (the daughter) separated from narrow-minded thinking among Hmong men or siblings.

The Hmong bible study group had a faculty advisor who was instrumental in providing a safe haven for the five students at College 1 in the same way the College 2 sorority was for that female participant. Per her request, I sent my pre-designed permission letters, explanation of research, IRB approval document and protocol lists. Once the Dean of Students approved the study, then the faculty advisor contact, who was also Hmong approached the Hmong Student campus Fellowship, promoted the study and signed-up interest upper level Hmong students into scheduled time slots to meet the following week.

Scheduling interviews turned out better than expected. I learned how important it was for me to learn the institutional culture. Internal policies about external researchers are managed differently in each case and school. I think it was my IRB approval that persuaded the Administration to support the study. They requested a finished book at the end for the school to benefit from the primary data and analysis. So the success of that relationship forged a partnership with a small private denominational college that was antithetical to UCF. I didn't expect this level of support. When I ensured confidentiality, anonymity, and legitimacy by complying with their requests, I received instant collaboration between authority figures and participants.

Some of the deep-seated conflicts between families come from a deep-seated spirituality that historically was the central pulse of the community. In the name of religion, whether Christian or Shaman, spirituality is a dimension that cannot be

overlooked by the administration when planning programs, both socially and academically. It would be supportive if the college showed sincerity about increasing the Hmong numbers in the student population.

My study uniquely spoke to Hmong students in denominational and state university sectors of higher education. The variations noted in both types of student were that the common spirituality of students at the denominational college introduced a built-in atmosphere for mutual belongingness, shared norms and values, and a similar interest for a missionary college to openly share curiosity in learning more about non-U.S. cultures. The denominational college was located in a section of the conventional South, where agriculture made a significant contribution to the state economy and a gravitational bent towards the Hmong agricultural expertise. In contrast, Hmong college students in the Mid-West region were more likely to attend a large urban state university

College administrators, especially those in student services and counseling, who have students seeking their support, are trapped by their lack of awareness about the differences in Asian subdivisions and the differences between the Hmong and the Chinese, Vietnamese, Lao, or Cambodian. The evidence was apparent when Alicia, who was Hmong, was treated like a Chinese student. The findings indicate that Hmong students are more reserved and polite to adult authority than their majority of other students. Administrators need to learn how to identify Hmong culture, detect when Hmong retreat in class from contributing to class participation, interacting with faculty and peers, and their need to visibly recognize respect and acceptance from all facets of the campus towards their importance to the campus.

John Mayer waited too long to seek academic support with poor grades due to writing weaknesses, team interactions, and interest in staying at the end of the day to meet and speak with other students who were having the same problem. When he received bad grades that affected his GPA, he was not aware of how close he was to keeping his scholarship. Having a GPA two tenths of a point below the cutoff resulted in his loss of funding and was devastated to have to return home to face his father. Luckily, he had his pastor back in Sacramento CA to counsel and advise him on what to do next.

If administrators initiated communication, offered tutoring resources, discussed new options for financial aid, he or she would have evidence that he or she was important to those other than university faculty and peer groups. Hmong students, according to several research participants, are looking for sincerity, to hear their ethnic name spoken by the administrator without a grimace, and to receive respectful interest in their well-being. When individuals feel like they matter and that they do not need to change their essence to be included, then they feel a sense of belonging (Freeman et al., 2007).

College administrators have spent time and resources in the past three decades to create initiatives that support, develop, and assimilate African Americans, Latinos, and other underserved students. It is the administrator that plays a pivotal role in reducing risks that Hmong student encounters and raise the image of the college in their diversity goals to reap and report improved academic performance, confidence and self-esteem, and sustained tenacity to graduate.

The faculty for a course or the faculty advisor who is open to discovering new ways to reach students through suggesting extra time and exercises after class, office

visits for discussion, and flexibility in grading, relaxes the Hmong student to turn to that person when non-academic interferences occur. This is a critical tenet in the university sense of belongingness model that makes a difference in the level of belongingness felt by students who have bouts of depression, rejection, and alienation.

When faculty advisors recommend lectures, events, or field trips outside of the class room so that students can observe a concept taught in class, it demonstrates a degree of innovativeness and customization that offers creative support structures, especially in large universities. Two Hmong participants mentioned the need to detach from the campus Hmong community and switch to associations with Caucasians students where they found help and resources.

### Emergent Themes

The four emergent themes from the transcript data analysis showcased key transitions, coping methods, finding and utilizing resources, and designing a personal pathway to the American Dream through the door of the American Dream. The developed themes were (a) heritage identity and the American Dream future (b) the armor of university belongingness (UNSB); (c) garnering resources; and (d) academic seduction. In aggregate, the epoche between my interactions and theirs led me to realize that if Hmong College students attained the baccalaureate degree they would recognize the benefits of the college experience that went beyond knowledge, social networks, and critical thinking skills.

## Implications and Recommendations

### *Recommendations for Hmong Students*

Hmong college students appreciate the presence of a successful Hmong member of the administration or faculty. For a variety of reasons, having an example of a Hmong faculty member or administrator, who possesses at least a baccalaureate degree, participates in the American Dream, earns nothing less than a middle class income, owns a home, or drives a well-maintained auto to commute. The outcome of having the bachelor's degree, speaks volumes to Hmong secondary school seniors, young mothers and fathers with babies that college is crucial in convincing Hmong high school students that college is worth it. For the first-generation college student who lives on the East coast of the United States (US), it is reassuring to know there is (are) a non-parental adult(s), who culturally identifies with the transitions, struggles, and feelings of inadequacy in campus interactions. Hmong students need to have a Hmong administrator or adult counselor role model on-campus to provide affirmation and advice to students or their parents when supportive but uneducated parents cannot provide insight into the student's lived-college experience.

### *Recommendations for Faculty and Advisors:*

One of my participants indicated that in his childhood, Hmong youth were raised to be non-competitive, meek and soft-spoken, void of self-promotion or questioning adults when critical thinking was required. This implies a high probability for

communication conflicts (verbal and non-verbal) between Hmong and non-Hmong students is likely. College Administrators need to proactively prepare to address and divert alienation and bipolarity on campus. These research findings provide insight on Hmong perceptions and interpretations of how other students perceive and react to them and their culture. It is recommended faculty and advisors create teams of advisors every term to counsel Hmong students on which courses or professors to take, which discipline to declare as an area of interest, or to undergo special testing to diagnose cognitive difficulties.

Different forms of student body alienation indicate a perceived lack of commonalities between a misunderstood group of students and the majority of students. College leadership can and should proactively anticipate cross cultural conflicts between student factions, who lack familiarity with each other's communication codes and symbols. For example, when the influence of cultural upbringing steers Hmong to avoid eye-contact, or not confidently state their thoughts beyond the question, it can be misinterpreted to mean Hmong cannot be trusted or that they are unfriendly. The participants want to be treated like the majority. When a friendship is being formed between two study partners, one Caucasian and one Hmong, the Hmong does not want to be asked what his father does for a living. The Hmong are astute at distinguishing sincere friendship to find the common ground. They are also able to identify the liberal racists in the crowd who do not think they are prejudiced, and the insincere attempts to friendship to learn more about the Hmong's socio-economic status or the Hmong father's occupation. However, it must be recognized that some misunderstanding and

miscommunication is inevitable for the first and second generation Hmong because in U.S. society direct-eye contact connotes honesty and transparency, and louder and more assertive voices are noticed in an individualistic culture. Of the Hmong participants in the study, two were extroverted, confident in their English fluency, and initiated contact with non-Hmong. The implication was that the degree of belongingness and acceptance varied between second and third generations. The findings indicated that the majority of participants were shy enough to not initiate discussion or homework solutions when working in team assignments.

#### *Recommendations for University Administrators*

My recommendation for Administrators is to carefully discern that Hmong First-Year needs more than average academic counseling and mental health counseling to make a smooth adjustment from local grades K-12 to regional and national grades 13-16. Many of Hmong College students, who are enrolled, fall into the first and second generation of college students in their family. They have not yet managed tensions with their cultural norms with the traditions of an academic culture. Although a Hmong community may exist for finding acceptance in a common heritage, the Hmong student has multiple communities to navigate in college circles to receive acceptance. These are new support networks in new churches within new communities that Hmong students must initiate on their own. They must learn to masterfully handle reactive anti-Shaman bias aimed at excluding Hmong students from mingling.



One skill area that should be examined by administrator is Hmong competencies to technology and the use of software learning tools that may be unaffordable for the average Hmong family's financial resources. I would recommend that Administrators create various forms of access to software tutoring tools, instructional classes, and computer lab work study positions for Hmong students to increase their skill level to that of their student counterparts. I sensed an eerie absence of dialogue regarding online tools, digital equipment, and general competency in usage and laptop ownership. When a student is ill-prepared for daily use of basic classroom technology, it compromises the success of the course for the student, faculty, and the departmental disciplines that may influence feelings of inadequacy and inferiority for many underserved student populations. During class, Hmong students may hide insecurities from having weak academic competency; lack of self-efficacy in the classroom, in time and financial management, and several overarching lack of exposure to the average college student tacit norms and expectations. Administrators at senior levels can budget for Hmong students to receive intense training that equips them to build confidence in class participation.

After my research visits to the two colleges, I perceived a disconnection between Hmong students and administrators. Administrators should consider garnering resources that assigns students to the college administrators. This unique form of mentorship would ameliorate Hmong student perceptions of neutrality or apathy on the part of college administrators for support in their unique issues. A mentor is someone who points out the unprinted etiquette and provides "wish I had known" resources on or near

campus surroundings that resolve the felt needs of students. It is harder to judge the actual felt needs of Hmong freshmen or to expect them to initiate contact with administrators, who often wait for students to approach them for resolution to their personal circumstances. The Hmong persona is easy-going, quiet, and not transparent, that could wreak havoc with administrative communications with Hmong students that could result in misinterpretation of the intent of both parties without knowing the context of Hmong culture. It is recommended that an Administrator-Hmong student mentorship would quickly familiarize the Hmong student, especially the first generation college attendee with knowledge of University support services that pertain to their complex felt needs.

I recommend that the college administration initiate small groups of orientation for all marginalized students. The gathering can be used as a forum to identify the status of individuals and ethnic identity regarding academics, social, financial, and other struggles that may be buried under a cloud of interpretation.

This also indicates that there are endless positive opportunities for administrators to develop effective academic and social programs to integrate the Hmong student with other multicultural ethnic identities and creatively uphold diversity initiatives. The admissions office in College 1 provided excellent support to Hmong students who were not guided through the college application process to ensure their access to college requirements. Admissions office support can benefit incoming and current Hmong students by helping them determine the most appropriate avenue to take depending on the nature of their issues. The benefit to college admissions being attentive to retention and

attainment is in influencing the issue of college preparedness and readiness for secondary Hmong students. If the college initiates the outreach, it might influence the high school to enhance its image in embracing diversity from their student's admission to graduation. An outreach from community colleges has a greater chance of admitting Hmong students in both first and second generation classifications, regardless of co-ed, single-sex, or denominational secondary school. The apparent appeal to Hmong students is language classes, financial aid, and funding set aside for Hmong educational needs.

My six interviews were rich 90-minute sessions of verbal and non-verbal observations that brought insight into their declaration of a major in their junior year. No mention was made, however, of ownership or use of personal laptops for classroom instruction, homework, or research where faculty have expectations of students to research in real time responses to classroom instruction. It implied that although the small denominational college had set aside funds to help pay tuition and books for Hmong student, there were no surplus funds to purchase or rent personal laptop.

It was noteworthy that as college students, none of my participants mentioned owning or using computer materials to remove the "digital divide" inequities among marginalized college students' knowledge of computers, which may be as important as a college degree. There was no indication or observed awareness if participants lacked or possessed technology skills as a major, area of interest, or career plans, which is lucrative knowledge to have. This implied that by not emphasizing the use of technology in courses the need to prepare the Hmong to find college graduate jobs that would contain a technology component may be being overlooked. For most of the population, technology

aptitude upon graduation promises a higher paying employment that cannot only open new and enriching opportunities for Hmong communities. My conclusion was that some sectors of colleges did not consider technology an essential learning and teaching tool. This was an egregious disservice to the Hmong, who started college at a disadvantage to improve academics or social integration for the Hmong in the predominantly white institution.

There is no perfect theoretical framework that works ideally, without some exception to the rule. Whether it is critical race theory, self-efficacy research, or other appropriate models, I chose the university sense of belongingness (UNSB) model as a lens to study the phenomenon of the Hmong dilemma, for a collective ethnicity that never belonged to nationhood, not even to the nation of the U. S. for the American-born Hmong. Chapters 1, 5, and 6 introduce, apply, and analyze the tenets which demonstrate that this theoretical model was best suited for my research topic. However, for future research another theoretical method or research question can build on the foundation of my study.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

An obvious follow-up to this research would be the study of other Southeast Asian experiences in Higher Education to contrast findings with this study on the Hmong. Future research that examines the influence of sector of college would complement this Hmong study is to take a positivistic approach to a specific hypothesis on belongingness factors by the Hmong in higher education.

If college administrators invested future efforts to learn and consider the Hmong student's emic perspective on campus interactions and solving problems, progress for all aspects of the student body would benefit. A heightened level of cultural sensitivity could enable administrators to forge ahead with a fresh look at diversity initiatives through the development of new student programming. Progress towards academic and social integration makes it possible for Hmong students to perceive belongingness to the campus family. If Administrators redesigned change campus culture that fosters greater acceptance and respect for Hmong students.

Administrative efforts to innovate student services and programs would positively impact the fulfillment of diversity initiatives to galvanize the campus environment into the hotbed. By definition, if culture is the way a group of people solve a problem (Trompenaars, 1993), then in celebration of the Hmong cultural presence on the campus, Administrators can create campus awareness and integrate Hmong traits into fiber for the entire campus community, with hosting town-gown events, and as a differentiator in college recruitment.

### Reflections of the Researcher

Discovering the essence of the Hmong culture in the post-secondary arena was a major undertaking, but tremendously worthwhile. As a Higher Education doctoral student and college faculty member, I found it admirable to find a culture-group whose parents were driven by the college passport as a path to a better life by following the

steps to arrive at Destination: American Dream. The American Dream construct is indescribably abstract with tangible outcomes.

One cultural dimension that caused hesitation to approach the research methodology section of individual interviews was the possible miscommunication between a Hmong collective people-group and my U. S.-born AfriCaribbean heritage of individualism. I sensed that if being a non-Hmong meant that I did not “fit in,” then the interview would be considered beneficial or worth interviewees’ participation. Sensing a lack of acceptance led me to think that I would not get the level of transparency and authenticity in response to the research protocol. Within the underserved Hmong culture, their norm to live the American Dream meant “learn to be one” with the Caucasian majority and disassociate with other marginalized cultures. But, like myself, I wondered if they knew they could be an individual, who belonged to the American Dream. Through hard work on every level, the Hmong college students bought into the American Dream Future and received it on graduation day.

The issues of the Hmong ethnic identity and minority classification created hesitancy to continue because of perceived negativity towards researcher influence, miscommunication and profession. My spirituality drove me to either concede to fear or embrace hope. Through leaps of faith and uncertainty about outcomes, I stopped looking at the U.S. Hmong as a novel culture group and more as individuals with the same aspirations, but with a trace of stubbornness to acknowledge their American citizenship, even if they clung to their Hmongness.

From my perspective as a researcher, I thought this qualitative study was interesting in that it was a twofold data collection interview and observation process: the concrete directness of the protocol and the unspoken indirectness of underlying Hmong cultural mannerisms at deeply rooted levels where values, norms, and beliefs reside in the psyche. The characteristics of the Hmong socio-cultural psychology appears to be: self-denial to defer to elders in family and authority figures in school; self-deprecation based on poor self-concept from defocusing on rewarding good work; and time management issues when prioritizing multiple academic tasks and responsibilities.

## CLOSING VIGNETTE

Before you realize it, your freshman students become your graduating seniors. Some students reach educational attainment and become the family's first college graduate legacy. Others, outside the borders of the average student of privilege, struggle to find balance living in two worlds of Hmong culture and academic learning. When I first met Mindi, I felt guilty that I could not invest more time to supporting his college transition. It was providential that Mindi figured it out by the end of the first semester and 15 weeks of accelerated ESOL courses. He realized that focusing on individual commonalities was more educational and valuable than fighting dissimilarities. In Mindi's eyes, Hmong immigrant family traditions became an outlier to privileged students who held power, control, and lived the American Dream. He was enlightened by his ever-growing campus network.

Mindi Moua took a bold step outside of his Hmong comfort zone found new venues to earn campus recognition and college-wide respect as a competitive soccer athlete and an innovative wind musician, who combined classical flute with the traditional Hmong qeej pipe. He initially became known as a brilliant classical musician. By his senior year, Mindi mastered jazz and rock renditions for contemporary campus bands and orchestras. His fellow musicians and athletes gave him nicknames. Once he succeeded, he was never called Mindi again, but Music Man or Mighty Moua, depending on his audience. Mighty Moua became a family legacy, not only to the Moua clan, but to also his university family.



APPENDIX A  
TIMELINE OF HMONG HISTORY

**TIMELINE OF HMONG HISTORY**  
(Yang Wang Meng Association of the U. S. of America)

**3000 B.C.-Hmong in China**

**2700 B.C. -** Historians speculate that the Hmong were inhabiting the Yellow River Valley in China. The Hmong and the Chinese began to have contact as the Chinese population grew and encroached upon traditional Hmong territories.

**1027 B.C-1279 A.D.-**There were recordings of the Hmong in Chinese records.

**1796-**Hmong King Sonom is killed.

**1810-**Hmong begin to move to Indochina.

**1810-1840-**The Hmong begin to cross into the highland regions of Northern Laos. The mountains would provide security for the Hmong people. This represents their first major diaspora.

**1840-** Major Movement of Hmong into Laos.

**1893-** French establish a protectorate into Laos.

**1896-** Hmong revolt over French taxes.

**1919-** Hmong Mad Man's War in opposition to French.

**1936-**Chongtou Lo, the son of Lo Bliayao, takes over his father's duties as Kaitong. However, due to his ineffectiveness he was replaced by his brother in law, Ly Fong. Ly Fong's ascension to the position of Kaitong would eventually lead to clan conflict pitting the Lo Clan against the Ly Clan.

**1938-** Touby LyFong is appointed kaitong by French.

**1936-1945-**During WW II, the Japanese controlled much of Southeast Asia, including Laos. The Lo Clan chose to support the Japanese occupation of Laos, while the Ly Clan favored the return of the French to Laos.

**1945-**As WW II comes to an end, the French resumed control over Laos.

**1952-**Catholic missionary Father Yves Betrais and two American linguists, Dr. Williams Smalley and Dr. Linwood Barney, developed a Hmong writing system based on the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA).

**1954**-The French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu; Laos gained their independence and became a member of the United Nations.

**Late 1950's**-American Green Berets begin arriving in Laos to assist in the struggle against the communist forces.

**1960**-Lo Fong, a leader in the Pathet Lao, created the Lao-Hmong alphabet.  
- Kong Le coup d' etat United States begins "Secret War" for Laos.

**1961-1973**-The Hmong, led by General Vang Pao, assist the United States in the struggle against communist expansion in Southeast Asia. This conflict has come to be known as the "Secret War," as result of the clandestine efforts of the United States CIA.

**1962**-The Geneva Accords reaffirm that Laos is a neutral country in the widening conflict in Southeast Asia.

**1964**- North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao occupy Plaine des Jarres.

**1965**-The United States began to provide air support for Hmong forces in Laos. The Hmong soldiers rescued downed American pilots, provided valuable reconnaissance information, and launched attacks against the Ho Chi Minh.

**1967**- U. S. Installs air guidance equipment in Laos Hmong, U. S. continue to resist Pathet Lao and NVA.

**1973**-A cease-fire agreement was signed between the Royal Lao Government and the Pathet Lao in Vientiane.

**1975**-As the Americans completed their withdrawal from Southeast Asia, the Pathet Lao takes control of Laos.

- General Vang Pao and many of his officers were airlifted from Long Cheng to Namphong, Thailand.

- The first groups of Hmong refugees arrived in Namphong, Thailand. While in Thailand, the Hmong would be forced to reside in refugee camps.

**1975-1978**- The United States experience the first wave of Southeast Asian immigration.

**1976**-Hmong refugees at Namphong are moved to Ban Vinai.

-The first Hmong individuals began arriving in Wausau with the assistance of various organizations.

- LPDR and People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) began the use of chemical-biological toxin warfare against the Hmong in Laos.

**1978-2003-**This period of time is labeled as the second wave of Southeast Asian migration to the United States.

**1978-**The Pathet Lao dropped a chemical agent called, " Yellow Rains," on Hmong villages in the Phou Bia region.

**1980-** United Nations adopted a resolution to investigate the use of chemical-biological warfare in Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan

**1981-** Western scientists detected chemical agents used against the Hmong and others were from the Soviet Union.

- General Vang Pao asked for an investigation into the use of chemicals against the Hmong.
- The United Nations voted for an investigation of the use of chemicals in Laos.
- The United States held hearings on the use of chemicals in Laos.

**1982-1984-** Secondary migration of Hmong within the U. S.

**1983-**The Wausau Area Hmong Association established.

**1984-** Nova's The Mystery of Yellow Rain aired. The pro-Meselson bee-dung theory was presented.

**1985-**Reports developed that said the Thai government had begun to repatriate the Hmong refugees to Laos.

**1991-**Laos, Thailand, and the United Nations signed an agreement to repatriated Hmong refugees to Laos.

**1993-** Hmong refugees flee Thai refugee camps rather than be repatriated. 10,000 Hmong seek refuge in Thai Buddhist temple.

**1995-**Representative Steve Gunderson (WI) and Representative Christopher Smith (NJ) began a five-man fact-finding mission to Thailand. They wanted information concerning repatriation and various atrocities. Their findings confirmed the information that had previously been considered rumors.

- All refugee camps in Thailand were closed.

**1996-**A census found that the Hmong population of Wausau was 4,200, approximately eleven percent of the total population. The Hmong represent the largest ethnic group in the Wausau area.

- Repatriation of Hmong is stops.

**1997**-Hmong veterans were recognized in Washington D.C. for their efforts during the Vietnam War.

**1998**- 4,660 Hmong living in Central Wisconsin.

**2000**-Representative David Obey (WI) co-sponsored a bill that made it easier for the Hmong refugees to become American citizens.

**2002**-The first Hmong senator, Senator Mee Moua, was elected in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**2003**-Minneapolis high school students march to the state capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota. Their group is known as the Asian Coalition Against Tobacco. (ACAT)

APPENDIX B  
EXCERPTS FROM HMONG VETERAN'S NATURALIZATION ACT OF 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES --2d Session 106±563  
APRIL 6, 2000 Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the  
Union and ordered to be printed  
Mr. HYDE, from the Committee on the Judiciary,  
submitted the following

## R E P O R T

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ``Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000''.

### SEC. 2. EXEMPTION FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN ALIENS WHO SERVED WITH SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS OR IRREGULAR FORCES IN LAOS.

The requirement of paragraph (1) of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1423(a) (1)) shall not apply to the naturalization of any person

(1) who

(A) was admitted into the United States as a refugee from Laos pursuant to section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1157); and

(B) served with a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, operating from a base in Laos in support of the United States military at any time during the period beginning February 28, 1961, and ending September 18, 1978; or

(2) who

(A) satisfies the requirement of paragraph (1) (A); and

(B) was the spouse of a person described in paragraph (1) on the day on which such described person applied for admission into the United States as a refugee.

### SEC. 3. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION CONCERNING CIVICS REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN ALIENS WHO SERVED WITH SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS OR IRREGULAR FORCES IN LAOS.

The Attorney General shall provide for special consideration, as determined by the Attorney General, concerning the requirement of paragraph (2) of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1423(a) (2)) with respect to the naturalization of any person described in paragraph (1) or (2) of section 2 of this Act.

### SEC4. DOCUMENTATION OF QUALIFYING SERVICE.

A person seeking an exemption under section 2 or special consideration under section 3 shall submit to the Attorney General documentation of their, or their spouse's, service with a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, described in section 2(1)(B), in the form of

(1) original documents;
(2) an affidavit of the serving person's superior officer;
(3) two affidavits from other individuals who also were serving with such a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, and who personally knew of the person's service; or other appropriate proof.

**SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXEMPTION AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.**

In determining a person's eligibility for an exemption under section 2 or special consideration under section 3, the Attorney General

(1) shall review the refugee processing documentation for the person, or, in an appropriate case, for the person and the person's spouse, to verify that the requirements of section 2 relating to refugee applications and admissions have been satisfied;
(2) shall consider the documentation submitted by the person under section 4;
(3) shall request an advisory opinion from the Secretary of Defense regarding the person's, or their spouse's, service in a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, described in section 2(1)(B) and shall take into account that opinion; and
(4) may consider any certification prepared by the organization known as "Lao Veterans of America, Inc.", or any similar organization maintaining records with respect to Hmong veterans or their families.

**SEC.6.DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION AND PAYMENT OF FEES.**

This Act shall apply to a person only if the person's application for naturalization is filed, as provided in section 334 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.1445), with appropriate fees not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SEC.7 LIMITATION ON World Book Encyclopedia "H" 270 (1995).**

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the total number of aliens who may be granted an exemption under section 2 or special consideration under section 3, or both, may not exceed 45,000.

Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 1997; and Canadian Border Boat Landing Permit Requirements: Hearing before the Subcomm. on Immigration and Claims of the House Judiciary Comm., 105th Cong., 1st Sess. at 19±20 (1997) (statement of Theodore Shackley) (hereinafter cited as "Hearing"). Amend the title so as to read: A bill to facilitate the naturalization of aliens who served with special guerrilla units or irregular forces in Laos.



## PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this bill is to expedite the naturalization of aliens who served with special guerrilla units in Laos during the Vietnam War.

## BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE LEGISLATION

### I. BACKGROUND

The Hmong are a mountain people from southern China and Northern areas of Burma, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. Beginning in the 1950's, Hmong soldiers fought the Communist Pathet Lao movement in Laos, and some Hmong later assisted U. S. Forces during the Vietnam War. After the war ended in 1975, the Pathet Lao gained control of Laos and persecuted and imprisoned many of the Hmong allies of the United States. Between 130,000 and 150,000 Laotian Hmong have entered the U. S. as refugees since 1975.

Immigration and Nationality Act sec. 312(a) (1). At great personal peril and loss of life, the Hmong fought with American forces and performed critical roles in dangerous missions. A former CIA officer stated to the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims that, throughout the war, CIA's paramilitary forces collected intelligence, used it in combat operations to tie down some 50,000 North Vietnamese forces in Laos, rescued downed American pilots and protected sensitive American installations at remote mountain tops.

The Hmong guarded LIMA Site 85, one of America's most important intelligence gathering sites during the Vietnam War. Close to the border of North Vietnam, this site allowed the United States to "look-down" electronically, on targets in Hanoi, the Red River Valley, and the Ho Chi Minh trail. Many Hmong refugees have found it difficult to naturalize because of a difficulty in learning English. This is due to the facts that they came from a tribal society without a written language until recent decades and that many Hmong were recruited to be guerrillas at the ages of 12±14 and hence did not attend school. In order to naturalize, permanent residents must demonstrate an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write, and speak words in ordinary usage in the English language. Hearing at 23±24. Idat 234

## II. CONCERNS ABOUT FRAUD AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION IN THE 105TH CONGRESS

H.R. 371 is designed to ease the path to naturalization in various ways for Hmong individuals who had fought in the CIA-organized guerrilla units in Laos in the 105th Congress, there were expressions of concern about potential fraud because of the possibility that Hmong refugees who did not actually serve in guerrilla units could claim to have done so. These concerns were related to difficulties in identifying which Hmong refugees actually fought on behalf of the United States as few records were kept of these covert operations.

According to data from the Departments of State and Justice, about 2,600 families (about 12,000 people) entered under a category reserved for those who claimed to have fought alongside U.S.

forces. However, these figures were suspect because

On June 26, 1997, the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims held a hearing on a 105th Congress bill providing naturalization relief to Hmong guerrillas (also numbered H.R. 371). Louis Crocetti (Associate Commissioner for Examinations, Immigration and Naturalization Service) testified that: H.R. 371 would be problematic to implement.

In essence, a naturalization applicant under [H.R. 371] would simply have to present documents claiming to have served in a special guerrilla unit. It is the experience of the Service in implementing programs which rely on affidavits (such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986) that fraud may be prevalent. Mr. Crocetti further testified that the INS takes no position as to whether Congress should amend the INA to provide exceptions to the Hmong."

## III. . THE BILL

H.R. . 371 in the current Congress is generally based on the Department of Justice proposal from 1998 and incorporates changes adopted by the committee last Congress to address fraud-related concerns. .The bill would exempt naturalization applicants from the English language requirement if they were admitted into the United States as refugees from Laos and served with special guerrilla units or irregular forces operating from bases in Laos in support of the United States at any time during the period beginning February 28, 1961, and ending September 18, 1978, or who were Spouses of such persons on the day on which such persons applied for admission as refugees. . The bill would also provide the aliens described above with special consideration as to the civics requirement for naturalization.

Section 312(a) (2) of the INA provides that a naturalization applicant must demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, and of the principles

and form of Government, of the United States. Section 312(b)(3) of the INA already provides special consideration for aliens over 65 years of age who have been living in the United States for periods totaling at least years subsequent to lawful admission for permanent residence. Under this standard, applicants are tested at a less difficult level. Applicants are asked 10 questions from a special list of 25 U. S. history and Government questions. Six must be answered correctly. The bill requires aliens to submit documentation of their or their spouse's, service with a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces. The bill provides that in determining an alien's eligibility for benefits under this bill, the Attorney General

The Lao Veterans of America includes tens of thousands of Hmong and Lao veterans and their families who played roles in the U. S. covert war in Laos and Vietnam. It has stringent requirements for membership: The criteria for joining our organization is first, filling out an application and submitting to an initial interview, secondly determining that the prospective member served a minimum of 1 year as a veteran and thirdly, be certified by a former commander or his representative, or the leader of the U. S. Secret Army in Laos, Major General Vang Pao. Finally, the applicant must be verified by a three member Memorandum from Louis D. Crocetti, Jr., to all INS field offices (Dec. 22, 1995), reproduced in 73 Interpreter Releases 86 (Jan. 16, 1996).military review board appointed by the Lao Veterans of America's Board of Directors and Advisory Board. To further reduce the potential for fraudulent claims, the bill provides that a maximum of 45,000 permanent residents may take advantage of the benefits provided by the bill. The 45,000 figure was chosen because according to information provided by the Lao Veterans of America; this is the outside range of the number of Hmong who actually should qualify for benefits under the bill. This legislation is supported by the American Legion and the Special Forces Association.

#### HEARINGS

No hearings were held on H.R. 371 in the 106th Congress. However, the committee's Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims held 1 day of hearings on the predecessor bill in the 105th Congress, also H.R. 371, on June 26, 1997. Testimony was received from Congressman Bruce Vento; Louis D. Crocetti, Jr., Associate Commissioner for Examinations, Immigration and Naturalization Service; Susan Haigh, Ramsey County Commissioner, St. Paul, Minnesota; Mark Pratt; and Mark Krikorian, Executive Director, Center for Immigration Studies.

#### COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

On March 28, 2000, the committee met in open session and ordered favorably reported the bill H.R. 371 without amendment by a voice vote, a quorum being present.

#### VOTE OF THE COMMITTEE

H. R. 371 was approved by a voice vote

#### COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM FINDINGS

No findings or recommendations of the Committee on Government Reform were received as referred to in clause 3(c) (4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

#### NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY AND TAX EXPENDITURES

Clause 3(c) (2) of House Rule XIII is inapplicable because this legislation does not provide new budgetary authority or increased tax expenditures.

Letter from Wangyee Vang, National President, Lao Veterans of America, Inc., to Lamar Smith, Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims (March 25, 1998).

APPENDIX C  
PERMISSION TO USE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

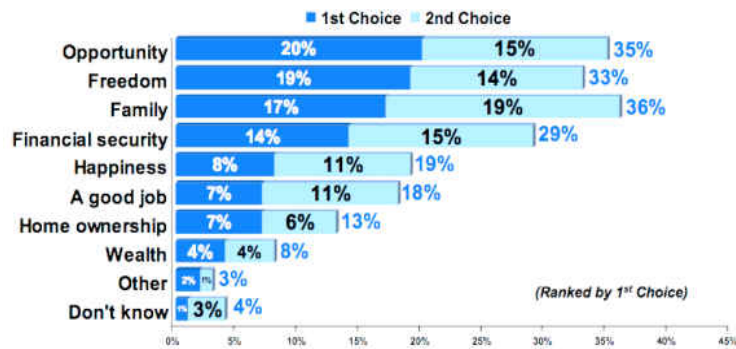
## Permission 1A

March 8, 2015

RE: Request for Permission to Use this Figure, March, 2010

### Americans most commonly define the American Dream in terms of opportunity, freedom and family.

When you think of the American Dream personally, which of the following words comes first to mind—not in terms of what anyone else believes the Dream is, but what you think it is?



Hello Xavier University  
Center for the Study of the American Dream

I need permission to use the above figure as a point of elaboration in my dissertation entitled, *Hmong Americans in Higher Education: Exploring their Sense of Belongingness and the Concept of the American Dream*.

The dissertation is not for sale and is used as an academic exercise to qualify me to receive my PhD in Education at the University of Central Florida. In case verification is needed, contact Dr. Rosa Cintron, the Chairperson of my Committee, at [rosa.cintrondelgado@ucf.edu](mailto:rosa.cintrondelgado@ucf.edu).

Thank you, in advance, for helping me reach academic goal. It is close to the end of the term and I need to resolve this matter in the next day or two. Hope to be in touch.

Sincerely,

Janet

Janet Fergus Daugherty,  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Central Florida College of Education and Human Performance

## Permission 1B



15 November 2013

Janet F. Daugherty, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate  
Higher Education & Policy Studies  
College of Education  
University of Central Florida  
PH: 321-948-0799

Dear Ms Daugherty,

Referring to your e-mail dated November 11, 2013, requesting permission to use the Table: Hmong Clan Surnames from page 195 of *Hmong/Miao in Asia*.

We are pleased to grant you the permission for the use of this material. Please include our copyright notice in each quote and in the acknowledgements.

Thank you for you interest in our books. If you have any inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kamolpaj Tosinthiti  
Assistant to the publisher

APPENDIX D  
HMONG AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS ENHANCING U. S. SOCIETY



**CONTRIBUTIONS OF NOTABLE HMONG AMERICANS  
(Carl Bankston, III, Hmong Americans)**

**MEDICINE**

- |   |
|---|
| <p>1. Dr. Bruce (Thow Pao) Bliatout was Director of the International Health Center in Portland, Oregon. He returned to Laos, where he worked for the Laotian government until 1975. He then returned to the United States and earned a Ph.D. in public health. Bliatout is an authority on Sudden Death Syndrome (SUDES), and has written widely on the subject.</p>   |
| <p>2. Dr. Xoua Thao arrived in the United States in 1976 at the age of 14. Dr. Thao's mother is a traditional herbalist and his father is a shaman. As a result of this family background in healing, Dr. Thao developed an interest in medicine and attended medical school at Brown University, where he received his medical degree in 1989. He is currently president of Hmong National Development and is studying for a law degree.</p> |

**SOCIOLOGY**

- |  |
|--|
| <p>1. Dr. Dao Yang became the first Hmong to receive a Ph.D. when he received a doctorate in social economics in France. He was one of the co-founders of Hmong National Development and remains active in social issues, such as the prevention of teenage pregnancy.</p>   |
| <p>2. Community Leader Vang Pao was leader of the Hmong army in Laos. Widely respected among older Hmong Americans and died in 2011.</p>   |
| <p>3. Community activist Dia Cha (1962) was project director with the United Nations Development Fund for Women where she assessed the needs of Lao and Hmong refugee women repatriates in Laos and in the refugee camps in Thailand. She authored the book <i>Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom</i> (1996) and compiled <i>Folk Stories of the Hmong</i> (1991) with Norma Livo.</p> |

**PRINT MEDIA**

- |  |
|--|
| <p>1. Dunnigan, T., et al. (1996) "Hmong" in <i>Refugees in America in the 1990s: A Reference Handbook</i>. In David W. Haines (Ed.). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.</p>         |
| <p>2. Ng, F. (1995, Winter). In Sucheng Chan (Ed.) <i>Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America</i>, 21(3), 245-248. <i>Amerasia Journal</i>. <i>Asian American Studies</i></p> |

<i>Center, Academic OneFile,</i>
3. The Hmong Homepage. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.hmongnet.org">http://www.hmongnet.org</a>
4. Quincey, K. <i>Hmong: History of a People</i> . Cheney: Eastern Washington University Press, 1988.
5. Sherman, S. (1988, October). The Hmong in America: Laotian Refugees in the 'Land of the Giants, <i>National Geographic Magazine</i> , 586-610.
6. n. a. (1992). <i>Southeast Asian-American Communities</i> . Kali Tal (Ed.) Woodbridge, Connecticut: Viet Nam Generation.
7. Vang, Pao. <i>Against All Odds: the Laotian Freedom Fighters</i> . Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1987.

- a. Community leader Vang Pao lives in Santa Ana, California.
  - He was leader of the Hmong army in Laos and is still widely respected, especially among older Hmong Americans.
- b. Community activist Dia Cha
  - Asian Community Outreach Coordinator at the Mental Health Center of Boulder County in Colorado where she supported Asian students and served as an intermediary between parents and faculty in Boulder Valley Public Schools.
  - Southeast Asian Tribal Collections Project at the Denver Museum of Natural History, where Cha organized collection materials, conducted research, and interviewed people to gather information.
  - Project Director with the United Nations Development Fund for Women she assessed the needs of Lao and Hmong refugee women repatriates in Laos and in the refugee camps in Thailand.
  - Authored the book *Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom* (1996) and compiled *Folk Stories of the Hmong* (1991) with Norma Livo.

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<b>PART 1</b>	
<b>DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY PROTOCOL</b>	
<b>1</b>	What is your full name? <i>Please print below. Include Hmong and U.S. names.</i>
1a	First: _____
1b	Middle: _____
1c	Last: _____
<b>2</b>	What city and state do you currently reside?
2a	City: _____
2b	State: _____
<b>3</b>	Enter a valid email address below.
<b>4</b>	What is your Birth date? _xx/xx/xxxx
4a	Month: _____
4b	Date?: _xx/xx/xxxx
4c	Year: _____
<b>5</b>	Where were you born?
5a	City: _____
5b	State: _____
5c	Country (Outside U.S.): _____
<b>6</b>	Have you attended college in the last two years?
6a	Which college? _____
6b	Where did you attend College(s)? _____
6c	Attended college since SP/12: Y or N
6d	College name? _____
6e	Location of college: _____
6f	Enrollment dates: <u>xx/xx/xxxx to xx/xx/xxxx</u>
6g	Received degree: Y or N <i>Circle</i>
<b>7</b>	What is your marital status? <i>Indicate your selection with a "Y" after colon</i>
7a	Married: _____
7b	Single: _____
7c	Committed Relationship: _____
7d	Divorced: _____
7e	Separated: _____
<b>8</b>	Have you declared a major?: _____
8a	What is your area of interest or declared major? _____
8b	What/Who led you to declare this major? _____
8c	Declared major? Circle answer: Y or N
8d	What Is Your Major?: _____
8e	Area Of Interest?: _____
<b>9</b>	Which U.S.-born Hmong generation do you belong? Generation: _____
<b>10</b>	List by gender how many brothers and sisters you have? <i>List them in the birth order and by their first name?</i>

10a	How many brothers?: ___
10b	How many sisters?: ___
10c	What is the birth order of siblings including yourself?: _____ _____ _____
11	What was the highest grade level completed by your
11a	mother?: _____
11b	By your father?: _____
11c	By your siblings?: _____
11d	By your Maternal grandmother?: _____
11e	By your Maternal father?: _____
11f	By your Paternal grandmother?: _____
11g	By your Paternal grandmother?: _____
11h	By your Mother's highest grade completed: ___
11i	By your Father's highest grade completed: ___
11c	By Siblings highest grade completed (If applicable): ___
11d	By Grandmother's highest grade completed: ___
11e	By Grandfather's highest grade completed: ___
12	How many credits have you taken each term? ___
12a	Do credits vary whenever you have a job? ___
12b	Are you employed while enrolled? ___ <i>Indicate your responses below.</i>
12c	This Term's Credits: ___
12d	Employed?: Y or N or Not Applicable. ___
12e	Work Part Time or Full Time: W or P. ___
13a, 13b	Do you have any children? If so, what are their ages? _____
13c	<u>CHILDREN? Y OR N</u>
13d	<u>AGES OF CHILDREN: _____</u>
14	Do you have close or distant relationships with other Hmong students?: _____
14a	<u>CLOSE OR DISTANT: C OR D</u>
15	Do you feel a sense of self-respect and self-acceptance?: _____
15a	<u>IN CLASS?: Y OR N</u>
15b	<u>WITH YOUR PROFESSOR?: Y OR N</u>
15c	<u>ON CAMPUS?: Y OR N</u>
16	<u>Do you look forward to awakening each day to attend classes?: Circle response Y OR N</u>

<b>PART 2</b>			
<b>UNSB TENETS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>			
	<b>UNSB TENETS</b>	<b>ATTRIBUTE</b>	<b>ITEM</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Class- Belongingness</b>	Self-Efficacy	How did sensing you belonged influence your sense of motivation to learn what you found useful, interesting, or knowledgeable now and in the past?
		Increased Intrinsic Motivation	What were the top three things happened to motivate your to reach for educational attainment?
		Task Value	How did sensing you belonged influence your sense of motivation to learn what you found useful, interesting, or knowledgeable now and in the past?
		Academic Productivity	How long does it take to complete class activities?
		Sense of Belonging to class	How did your college program welcome students from diverse backgrounds?
		Non-parental adult	Who had the most impact on your progress or your success so far?
<b>2.</b>	<b>Faculty Openness/Pedagogical Caring</b>	Not to embarrass publicly	What advice would you give prospective U. S. Hmong college students?
		Mutual respect for student learning potential	Could you elaborate on what kind of support did you have from faculty in general as well as your chair/major professor?
		Enables/Empowers student	What role did your major professor, other faculty, mentor, colleague, teacher, or administrator play in being perceived as a member of the University or class? (Repeat the question after each role).
		Belonging to the institution	How were you welcomed into your college as a Hmong student?  How would you describe your sense of school pride in your fellow Hmong community?

		Global sense of belonging	What kind of personal support network did you have outside the university while matriculated in your undergraduate program, i.e., financial, emotional, familial, and social?
<b>3.</b>	<b>University belongingness</b>	Affects Outcomes (School Scholarship)/Recognition	How did you perceive your University's level of student support services?
		Persistence/Incentives	What advice would you give prospective U. S. Hmong college students? Who or what information explained the college admission process to attend college?
		Improves self-image	Please share with me stories, with as much detail as possible, of situations that tested your resiliency?
		I can be myself	What, in particular, did you do to help other students understand the Hmong cultural heritage?
		Respectful interactions with others is conducive to developing a sense of belonging	How did sensing you belonged influence your sense of motivation to learn what you found useful, interesting, or knowledgeable now and in the past?
<b>4.</b>	<b>Campus-wide Social Acceptance and Respect</b>	Student's adjustment to college life and cognitive development	What memory of your college experience left a lasting impression? Why?
		Overall Student Satisfaction	Was the college experience worth it? If you could do it again, would you change anything?

<b>PART 2A</b>	
<b>HMONG-RELEVANT AMERICAN DREAM</b>	
<b><u>DESCRIPTOR</u></b>	<b><u>PROTOCOL</u></b>
<b>OPPORTUNITY</b>	<i>What new opportunity (ies) arose while attending college?</i>
<b>FREEDOM</b>	<i>What past experiences in life reflected your level of Freedom? Were any of those Experiences part of your College Experience?</i>
<b>FAMILY</b>	<i>What role does your immediate family play in your college experience? Have you experienced belongingness in the University? Family?</i>
<b>FINANCIAL SECURITY</b>	<i>Do you expect your baccalaureate degree will lead to upward mobility and financial security?</i>
<b>HAPPINESS</b>	<i>What academic or social interactions bring you happiness?</i>
<b>GOOD JOB</b>	<i>What skills, instruction, and competencies have you received in college that qualifies you for a good job?</i>
<b>HOME OWNERSHIP</b>	<i>What role does educational attainment play in your home ownership?</i>
<b>WEALTH</b>	<i>Are in college to get a good job that makes you wealthy or learned?</i>



APPENDIX F  
CONTACTS USED IN SELECTION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

1. NURSE PANG VANG

House of Peace (Exec Dir., Gerry Howard—Development Director)

Runs Nursing Clinic @ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

414-933-1590

Website: [www.houseofpeace.org](http://www.houseofpeace.org)

(Spoke to Tang on 5/15/13 about study; she will help me by first forwarding an email from Dr. Mark Pfeifer on helping those writing lit reviews, publishing papers on Hmong students.

Spoke to Nurse Vang 10/9/13-Referred by Nurse Pang Vang

Pang C. Vang, CHES, MEd, RN

UWM-House of Peace Community Nursing Center

1702 W. Walnut Street

Milwaukee WI 53205

414-933-1590

Hi Janet & Dao

Please accept this email introduction. Dao is a UWM staff [member] who works closely with the Asian American students at the University of WI Milwaukee. Dao--Janet is a PHD candidate who would like to recruit some Hmong students for her study. I thought you would be the best person for her to know.

Thank you – Pang Vang

1. Dao – Reply

From: Dao Vang <[dao@uwm.edu](mailto:dao@uwm.edu)>

To: Pang C Vang <[pangvang@uwm.edu](mailto:pangvang@uwm.edu)>

Cc: Jan Daughterty <[daugmatic@aol.com](mailto:daugmatic@aol.com)>

Sent: Thu, Oct 10, 2013 1:39 pm

Subject: Re: UWM contact for Hmong UWM students

Hi Janet,

I may be able to help with what you need. Please let me know if and when you are ready.

Dao

From: Lisa Hawj <[lisah@hmong.org](mailto:lisah@hmong.org)>

To: daugmatic <[daugmatic@aol.com](mailto:daugmatic@aol.com)>

Sent: Mon, Oct 14, 2013 12:24 pm

Subject: Contact Information for Hmong College Professors

Hi Janet -

It was a pleasure talking to you on the phone. Here are two very knowledgeable and well-connected college professors who may be able to help you with your research and with connecting you with Hmong students.

1. Pa Der Vang  
651-690-8647  
pdvang@stkate.edu

2. Lee Pao Xiong  
651-641-8870  
xiong@csp.edu

You can let them know that you were referred to them through Hmong American Partnership. Pa Der is actually a board member of our organization so she should be able to help. Let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Thank you,  
Lisa Her

Executive Assistant  
Direct: 651-495-1504

Email: lisah@hmong.org

Hmong American Partnership

1075 Arcade Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55106

Main: 651-495-9160

Fax: 651-495-1699

www.hmong.org

- c. The Hmong National Development (HND) Organization  
United States: Welcoming the Stranger  
Advocacy & Civic Engagement

The Hmong National Development (HND) organization advocates on behalf of Hmong American communities at the national level. The backbone of HND's Policy Advocacy Program is guided by the principle of affecting long-term social change that cultivates the development of the individual, the family, the organization, and the community in the United States.

•

#### Education

The myth of the “Model Minority”, which fabricates high level of education attainment and few barriers for achievement of Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), does great harm to the Hmong community. The Hmong community falls more in line with the Latino and African American communities in terms of rates of education achievement.

According to the U. S. Census Bureau, the Hmong Community had the lowest rates of educational attainment out of all AAPI groups, with 61% of Hmong having received high school diplomas, and only 14% having received bachelor’s degrees. Moreover, Hmong parents – many who are first generation refugees – are uneducated about the American school system and lack the understanding of how to be involved in their children’s academic lives. Without the proper family

support, Hmong students face many barriers in the path to earning a high school degree and striving for higher education.

- d. SPOKE ON MAY 21, 2013 TO MR. VAN HOVEN, NEWSLETTER HEAD OF HOUSE OF PEACE offered two sources for finding Hmong American college students:
- a. Ms. Kashoua Yang, Esq. works at Hawks Quindel law firm in Milwaukee, WI (see her story in June '13 newsletter, p. 3):kyang@hq-law.com, (800) 236-3348, or (414) 271-8650.
  - b. Attorney Kashoua Yang and the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic have added another location for the Hmong legal clinic.
    - i. There are two volunteer legal clinic locations serving the Hmong community: the House of Peace, 1702 W. Walnut St, every third Thursday of the month and Highlander Home Health Care, 5626 N 91st St # 203, every second Saturday of the month. b. Pastor Ronald Charles Nunuk, Youth Pastor (from Myanmar); ministers to Hmong community; Ronaldcharles\_Nunuk@Abhms.Org

APPENDIX G  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138  
To: Janet F. Daugherty  
Date: March 20, 2014

Dear Researcher:

On 3/20/2014, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Hmong Americans in Higher Education: Exploring their sense of belongingness and the American Dream  
Investigator: Janet F. Daugherty, MBA  
IRB Number: SBE-14-10192  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewska, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/20/2014 04:19:37 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX H  
PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATIONS

## REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION LETTER

Dear College Declared Major:

My name is Janet Daugherty and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational and Human Sciences at the University of Central Florida. I am conducting research on the experiences of Hmong American students in college baccalaureate programs. The purpose of my study is to explore the Hmong American social and academic experiences from the point of view of Hmong American college upperclassmen, i.e., who are college juniors and senior declared majors, who understand academic transitional adjustments between secondary and postsecondary school. In particular, I would like to request your assistance with my dissertation study. I am particularly interested in Hmong Americans, regardless of U.S. generation, age, gender, or matriculation category. Please also note that in order to participate in this study both parents must be of Hmong descent, regardless of generation, as well as U.S. citizens.

Your participation will involve postal, email, or phone correspondence and the use of a computer with the software “Skype” for one interview. The postal, email, and phone correspondence will be used to discuss any questions you may have before agreeing to the interview, to make sure you have access to a computer with “Skype,” to send you the Participant Confirmation Letter and an Informed Consent Letter that all participants must sign and to make arrangements for a time and date for our interview to take place. The actual interview will take place at a date and time of your choosing and will last for 90 minutes. The interview will be conducted through semi-structured open-ended interview questions. You will be provided with the interview questions prior to the interview. A second interview may be necessary for clarification of responses, and if so, it will be based on your most convenient schedule.

Should you be willing to participate, please email me your availability, along with your “Skype” username and a phone number where you can be reached, so that I may set up an interview time, at your earliest convenience.

In order to ensure confidentiality, your name will not be disclosed at any time. If you are willing to participate in this study or would like to ask questions please contact me at [jfdaughe@ucf.edu](mailto:jfdaughe@ucf.edu) or at (321) 948-0799. Your contribution will address the lack of literature on the experiences of Hmong Americans in postsecondary education.

Thank you for your time and support with this study. Your contribution to my study and the Hmong community are most appreciated.

Thank you very much,

Janet Daugherty  
Doctoral Candidate  
College of Education  
University of Central Florida  
[jfdaughe@ucf.edu](mailto:jfdaughe@ucf.edu)



## PARTICIPANT CONFIRMATION LETTER

Dear College Declared Major:

Thank you so much for assisting me with my dissertation research by agreeing to participate in an interview. I am a second generation, multiracial Trinidad American, who resided in Asia on a five year tour with plans to return to teach in Southeast Asian universities. As a current doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida in the Department of Educational and Human Sciences, my research will explore the academic and social experiences of Hmong Americans students in college programs. This study will provide further understanding of experiences on persistence and resilience among Hmong students in graduate education.

If you have agreed to be interviewed you acknowledge that you are a Hmong American college student with dual Hmong lineage.

I have attained permission from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Central Florida to conduct this study. Completion of this study will be valuable because it will lead to further understanding of belongingness and inclusion for Hmong students in postsecondary education.

Enclosed, you will find information regarding the mutual date and time of our interview. If you have any questions regarding your participation in the interview or questions about the interview itself, please contact me at (321) 948-0799 or at [jfdaughe@ucf.edu](mailto:jfdaughe@ucf.edu).

Thank you for your time and support with this study. Your contribution to my study and the Hmong community are most appreciated.

Thank you very much,

Janet Daugherty  
Doctoral Candidate  
College of Education  
University of Central Florida  
[jfdaughe@ucf.edu](mailto:jfdaughe@ucf.edu)

APPENDIX I  
KEYWORD REDUCTION: CATEGORIES AND CLUSTERS

## DATA CATEGORIES BY CODE

Number	Category	Code
1	Belong(ing)(ness) (UNSB)	SB
2	Educational Attainment - Graduation	EA
3	Prototypes for Community	PC
4	American Dream Future	AD
5	College Prep	CP
6	Identity	ID
7	Faculty or Advisor Caring	FC
8	Perceptions of College Lived Experiences	LE
9	Transition / Change	TR
10	Struggles / Conflicts	SG
11	University Belongingness	UB
12	Similarities /Commonalities Amongst Themselves	SC
13	Personal / Romantic / Influential Relationships	PR
14	Emotional-Mental Health Emic Perspective	EM

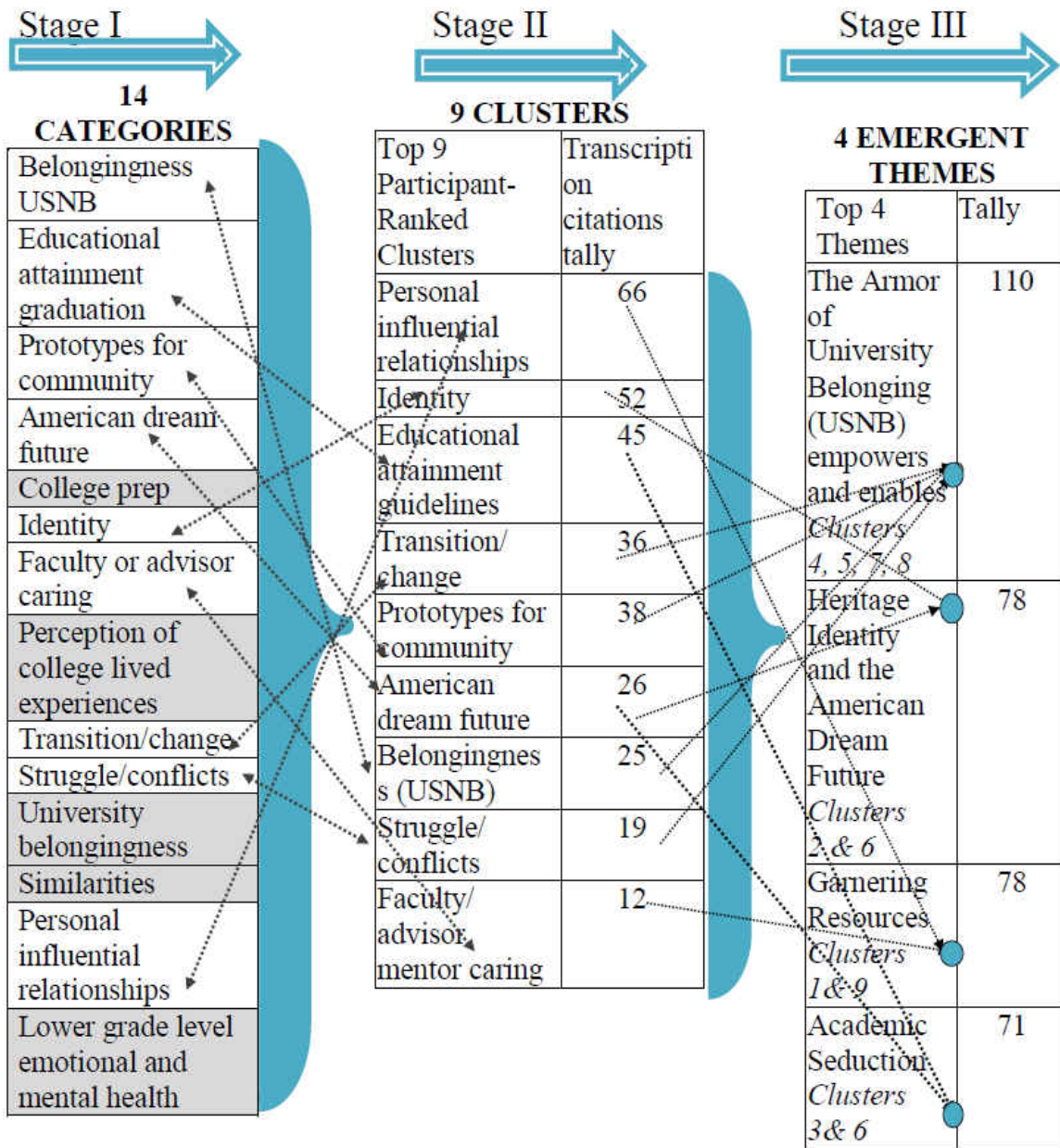
## KEYWORD CATEGORIES AND CLUSTERS

### American Dream Future

	<b>Keyword Categories (14)</b>	<b>Top-ranked Data Clusters (9)</b>	<b>Tally</b>
1	Belong(ing)(ness) (UNSB)	Personal / Influential relationships	66
2	Educational attainment graduation	Identity	52
3	Prototypes for Community	Educational Attainment Graduation	45
4	The American Dream Future	Prototypes for community	30
5	College Prep	Transition / change	36
6	Identity	The American dream future	26
7	Faculty /Advisor / mentor caring	Belong (ing) (ness) (UNSB)	25
8	Perceptions of College Lived Experiences	Struggles / Conflicts	19
9	Transition / Change	Faculty advisor-mentor caring	12
10	Struggles / Conflicts		
11	Similarities		
12	University Belongingness		
13	Personal/ Romantic/ Influential Relationships		
14	Emotional-Mental Health Emic Perspective		

THEMATIC CATEGORY ANALYSIS BY PARTICIPANTS								
TOP 4 THEMES	CITATION TALLY	RANK	SELENA	TAYLOR	RIHANNA	JOHN	ALICIA	ADELE
The Armor of (UNSB) (Clusters 4, 5, 7, 8)	110	First	Personal / Romantic Influential Relationships (18)	Educational attainment graduation (17)	Personal / Romantic Influential Relationships (15)	Identity (17)	Educational attainment graduation (19)	Educational attainment graduation
Heritage Identity and the American Dream Future (Clusters 2, 6)	78	Second	Belong(ing)(ness) (UNSB) (14)	Identity (15)	Prototypes for Community (13)	Lower Grade - Emotional - Mental Health - Emic Perspective (10)	Personal / Romantic Influential Relationships (17)	Educational attainment graduation (9)
Garnering Resources (Clusters 1, 9)	78	Third	American Dream Future (13)	Transition / Change (12)	Faculty Advisor Mentor Caring (12)	Transition / Change (9)	Transition / Change (15)	Identity (8)
Academic Seduction (Clusters 3 & 6)	71	Fourth	Identity (12)	Struggles / Conflicts (11)	Belong(ing)(ness) (UNSB) (11)	American Dream Future (6)	American Dream Future (7)	Prototypes for Community (7)
		Fifth	Prototypes for Community (10)	Personal / Romantic Influential Relationships (10)	Struggles / Conflicts (8)	Personal / Romantic Influential Relationships (6)	Perceptions of College Lived Experiences (6)	College Prep (6)

APPENDIX J  
THREE-STAGE REDUCTION PROCESS



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