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The Impact of Culture on the Education of Hmong Men

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THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON THE EDUCATION OF HMONG MEN

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Abstract

This study completes the final Capstone Project for the Master Science in Education in Professional Development (MSE-PD) program. The intention of this study was to try to identify the barriers and cultural influences of Hmong culture on Hmong men who are seeking higher education in the United States. Participants were recruited from one midwestern university. Eighteen Hmong men participated in semi-structured interviews. The research examined Hmong culture in the United States, gender and culture expectations, the role of education in assimilation, and Hmong men's pursuit of higher education. The main challenges participants described for succeeding in higher education were lack of direction/guidance, money, study habits, time management, and motivation. All of these obstacles link back to family disadvantages and cultural influences.

Chapter One

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to study the influences of Hmong culture on the academic experiences of Hmong men in higher education. Due to a gap between Hmong and American culture and language, Hmong men often encountered numerous problems in their adaptation to higher education. According to Xiong and Lee (2011), Hmong students in higher education have expectations of themselves, their families, their clan, and the Hmong community that contrast with the expectations of other students. Since the Hmong-American community is relatively small, and expectations for children are high, Hmong students have multiple pressures to do well culturally and academically.

Growing up in Laos and Thailand, the Hmong people resided on the mountain sides, and agriculture was the main source of making a living. The majority of Hmong parents either had no formal or very limited education. Hmong families often lacked the proper support and resources to assist family members attain higher education. Even though Hmong parents do encourage their children to obtain higher education, they may lack the knowledge to provide adequate support (Xiong & Lee, 2011). In addition, Hmong parents often encounter language barriers and may lack knowledge of the educational system. However, a majority of Hmong parents now understand that having a basic education is essential for their children's survival in this country (Lee & Green, 2008). According to Lo (1998), success in America is dependent on how Hmong families support their children in successfully accomplishing American education.

Cultural influences have a significant impact among Hmong men's academic experiences in higher education. Besides the language barrier, several other factors are thought to be significant barriers for Hmong men in America. Some examples include inter-generational

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family conflict, beliefs about education, adjustment to American culture, and barriers to post-secondary education. Similar to many refugee populations, the Hmong were not prepared for migration to the United States. Following the Vietnam War, they suffered culture shock upon resettlement in the late 1970s and 1980s and have continued to face multiple social, cultural, educational, economic, and institutional barriers and challenges. In the following review of the literature, the correlation of the successes among Hmong men in higher education and cultural influences is investigated. I conducted the following study with a population from southeastern Wisconsin during April 24 and May 14, 2012. The interview questions were developed to investigate demographic information, perceptions of experiences in higher education, family contributions, cultural and community influences, and gender. During the course of this study, responses and feedback were taken in the form of personal interviews.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter explores the many hardships Hmong people have faced and how these adversities still affect the Hmong people and culture. Based on a mainly agrarian society, the Hmong people have a very traditional family structure based on close-knit communities, clearly-defined gender roles, and family-centered lifestyle. This structure can impede the goals of Hmong-American men because traditionally, education has not been a large part of the Hmong lifestyle. This can be especially true for Hmong women. No matter the gender, however, traditional Hmong families have had trouble adjusting to an American society where education has become a large part of a family's success.

History of the Hmong People

The Hmong constitute one of the most ancient peoples of Asia, (Duffy, Harmon, Ranard, Thao, & Yang, 2004). Since the Hmong language had never been written until the 20th century, very few documents about Hmong history exist before that period. Hmong folk tales describe an ancestral homeland of ice and snow, darkness and light, which lead some to the assumption that the Hmong originated in central Siberia. Other Hmong legends describe Hmong ancestors having blond hair and blue eyes with origins from the Middle East. Some oral tales insist that the Hmong people are one of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel.

According to Duffy et al., (2004), the earliest written accounts of the Hmong – or Miao, as the Hmong are called in China – are found in Chinese annals dating to the third century BCE. These records focus on the many Hmong uprisings against the Chinese state, which regarded the Hmong as barbarians in need of the civilizing influences of Chinese culture. Driven off their rice fields in the fertile valleys of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, the Hmong gradually moved south

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to higher altitudes.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, the Hmong continued to move south and settled to the highlands of Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos (Crevier, 2002). The settlement of the highlands in Southeast Asia was a peaceful period for the Hmong people. The Hmong reside in different villages according to kinship (clans) throughout the mountain regions. Due to the many centuries of oppression from the Chinese government, the Hmong communities had minimal association with domestic government affairs. The Hmong relied on agriculture and livestock as a main source of life. Education and political involvement was not a priority for the Hmong community.

In 1954, the French protectorate in Indochina ended after 61 years and Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia were recognized as independent states by the Geneva Accords (Creiver, 2002). This independence created a civil war between the Royal Laos government and the Pathet Laos. The Royal Laos government was aligned with the French and supported by the United States and the Hmong. The Pathet Laos were communists aligned with the Viet Minh in North Vietnam.

According to Crevier (2002), when the United States increased secret military operations in the 1960's, the Hmong residing in the villages of the northern highlands of Laos were recruited to support these operations. The Hmong were knowledgeable of the mountains and valleys of the region. The United States tried to prevent Vietnam from falling to communist influence. The United States believed the fall of Vietnam to communism would influence other countries in the Indochina region to become communist. This belief led the United States government to enlist the support of the Hmong.

Under the leadership of General Vang Pao, the Hmong countrymen agreed to form an alliance with the United States. Apart from supporting the Royal Laos government, the Hmong

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militants were assigned three main responsibilities: the blockade of North Vietnamese convoys along the Ho Chi Minh trail, the rescue of fallen American pilots in North Vietnam, and the protection of the radar system located on the Pathee Plateau in central Sam Neua, a province in northeastern Laos (Podeschi & Xiong, 1992). Regardless of the outcome of the war, the United States agreed to ensure the Hmong safety and a secure place to reside.

According to Shi (2001), there was a subsequent fall of the area to the Pathet Laos after the United States withdrew from Vietnam in 1973. The allegiance with the United States led the current Laos government to declare the Hmong as enemies. Fearing for their lives, thousands of Hmong families were forced to flee their homes in Laos and seek refuge in Thailand. The Hmong who fled to Thailand stayed in the refugee camps before they were given the opportunity to settle in other countries such as the United States, France, Canada, and Australia.

Hmong Culture in the United States

One of the most pressing post-immigration issues facing the Hmong American community is family conflict. Immigrant parents in the United States are slower to assimilate into the culture as compared with their children, who often rapidly adapt to the mainstream culture (Su, Lee, & Vang, 2005). Hmong children raised in the United States, as compared to children raised in Asia, tend to rely less on their parents to teach them basic cultural values and life skills (Lee, Jung, Su, Tran, & Bahrassa, 2009). Hmong parents feel that the children are forgetting the cultural values and traditions that have been practiced within the Hmong community for many generations. To handle this concern, Hmong parents feel the need to exert greater control over their children. Hmong parents become distressed about the loss of status roles, ways of life and culture within their families (Yang, 2003). Hmong children, in turn, feel a lack of support and understanding from their parents, who may be viewed as overly suspicious

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and controlling of their children's lifestyle and friendship choices (Supple & Small, 2006).

According to Nibbs (2006), the Hmong have been traditionally self-governed through their tradition and respect for the authority of village elders. This custom has been practiced by Hmong families for many generations. The influence of American culture has encouraged Hmong communities to become less dependent and more individualistic. Hmong communities have undergone drastic shifts due to contact with United States society in recent decades, and the older generation is aware that their status may be changing (Stanford, 2010). It has been difficult for those young Hmong children because they must weigh and choose their paths with caution. They must select the best possible way to show respect to clan and Hmong leaders, while at the same time living within the hierarchical Hmong family structure in an American society (Lee, 2007). A high degree of conflict between parental and younger generations results in the perception that a cultural generation gap is a common part of the Hmong American experience (Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010).

According to Swartz, Lee, and Mortimer (2003), Hmong family formation patterns and life course transitions differ from those of many of their non-Hmong peers. Traditional Hmong culture embraces relatively early marriage and childbearing. The transition to adulthood occurs relatively quickly. By the time Hmong children enter adolescence, most of them are married and have started their own families. Some scholars have argued that because of the lack of adolescence as a developmental stage in the traditional Hmong society, the need for parents to continue to set limits, monitor, and enforce curfews is irrelevant (Tuicomepee, Rettig, & Xiong, 2008).

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Gender

According to Lee et al., (2009), Asian parents who migrate to the United States as adults are more likely to retain the lifestyle, values, traditions, and customs of their homeland, and less likely to uniformly adopt the mores of American society, particularly in regard to raising and socializing their children. The Hmong culture has specific gender expectations for children to fulfill in order to maintain the smooth function of the family (Crevier, 2002).

In the Hmong culture, the daughters typically have the toughest time adjusting to the demands of the family. They have responsibilities ranging from school work, house chores, and upholding a good cultural reputation. Hmong daughters are also usually the caretakers for younger siblings. Hmong parents are protective of the reputation and purity of their daughters until they are married. Many Hmong-American parents are concerned that Hmong girls are being corrupted by bad influences from American society and consequently damaging the family's reputation. Daughters are raised traditionally and prepared for the next stage of their life, which is to become a woman and a good wife and daughter-in-law to his family (Yang, 2011).

Hmong parents also worry about the welfare of their sons; however, they tend to express lower levels of concern, control, and influence over their sons' personal choices and lifestyles. Hmong men are expected to be the breadwinners of the family and succeed educationally and financially. They inherit the responsibility for the family name and reputation of their clan. According to Yang (1997), male children are the primary care providers for parents and elders in old age, and continue to worship the parents and ancestors in the after-world. They are viewed as the eventual pillars of the family. Hmong men are expected to continue to be the keepers of culture and values (Xiong & Detzner, 2005).

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Married couples are considered part of the husband's family. Hmong families have very high expectations of men. A son will eventually add more labor power to the family, while a daughter will take her labor power and marry into a different family (Yang, 1997).

Hmong Students and Education

According to Swartz, Lee, and Mortimer (2003), it is clear that Hmong young people faced many additional disadvantages upon arrival in the United States. In particular, their parents had lower levels of formal education, higher rates of unemployment than the parents of their non-Hmong peers, and were much more likely to live in poverty. Most Hmong parents are concerned about their children's education, but many of them are refugees who have not had any formal education and lack the educational background to provide necessary support at home (Vang, 2004). According to Xiong (2007), many uneducated Hmong parents depended on schools to educate their children and provided little or no support because they did not know how to help their children to do well in school. Language barriers are an impediment to Hmong parental involvement (Hang, 1997). Hmong parents assumed that schools would provide their children with academic and cultural skills, as well as employment to survive in American society. Some parents are still locked into the old belief system that school personnel have sole authority over their children's public education (Vang, 2005).

Hmong students in American schools continue to encounter difficulties and barriers in their attempts to both succeed academically and to adapt to American society. Many of them experience cultural differences, conflicts with identities at school and home, language barriers, the process of assimilation, and little or no formal family education background. Being immersed in a new culture also causes stress that results in the development of physical disorders. People who are prepared for the new culture, such as international students, encounter

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fewer problems. There are many factors that influence the Hmong transition to American society such as English proficiency, reasons for immigrating, age of arrival in the new country, and educational background (Shi, 2001).

Age has an impact on immigrants' adjustment. Younger Hmong children adapt more easily to a new culture and language because they have not developed deep attachments to their own culture. Most of the Hmong who were born, or grew up, in the United States can easily fit in with mainstream English speaking individuals, groups, and communities. In contrast, Hmong students who arrived in the United States at an older age have found it unpleasant in schools because they were less fluent in English (Lor, 1998). Many of these students have little or no previous formal education in refugee camps and require extra educational assistance. For these students, learning English along with American culture can be especially challenging (Vang, 2009).

Shi (2001) suggests Hmong students who receive support from communities, families, peers, and educators have more success in American schools. Also, making friends within both cultures enables students to have a smoother transition into American schools and society. According to Swartz, Lee, and Mortimer (2003), Hmong students have similar educational aspirations as their non-Hmong counterparts in high school, hoping that they will attain a four-year bachelor's degree and a master's degree despite their low socioeconomic status and the absence of professional role models within their families.

Hmong Men's Pursuit of Higher Education

Despite the lower levels of concern from parents, Hmong men who pursue higher education are reported to have more expectations from their mothers and fathers than Hmong women who pursue higher education. Hmong men have more expectations due to inheritance of

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the family name and representation. For the Hmong men, family conflicts may include competing parental forces, specifically dissonant acculturation and parental monitoring. Regarding the latter, family conflict may be a sign of greater concern or investment of parents in their sons' academic lives. This parental pressure for Hmong men to succeed academically may discourage them from engaging in certain delinquent behaviors, and encourage them to persist in college (Lee et al., 2009). Despite the high expectations that family conflict may cause on Hmong men, to some extent this negative reinforcement serves as a motivating factor. However, failure is not tolerated as individual success or failure is a direct reflection on the upbringing of parents and the clan as a whole (McClain-Ruelle & Xiong, 2005).

According to Yang (1997), the majority of Hmong men in the United States have many difficulties acculturating. While more Hmong men are now physicians, lawyers, professors, and other professions requiring higher education, the percentage of Hmong men employed in these professions is still very small. Many Hmong men are distressed because of the ability of Hmong women to generate income in the United States. They feel their traditional roles of the breadwinners and leaders of the family are being threatened.

Summary

The Hmong culture has many traditions and cultural expectations. However, not all of the traditions and cultural expectations are appropriate in American society. Hmong students still encounter difficulties with education because of expectations from their family and the Hmong community. Although Hmong men and women may encounter similar experiences in higher education, the cultural influences on each gender are different. Hmong men traditionally have taken the role of being the breadwinners and carriers of the clan name. However, it has been difficult for Hmong men to adjust to the evolving roles of gender equality. According to Yang

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(2007), one of the biggest changes for the Hmong culture is Hmong women are becoming more educated and independent. The changes cause Hmong men to feel insecure in their ability to uphold traditional Hmong duties. Despite the traditional gender expectations and changes, Hmong men continue to move forward and strive for their best in preserving culture and academics achievements.

Chapter Three

Methods of Research

In this chapter, the method of the study is presented. The design of the study is similar to Yang's (2011) research. However, this study examined gender and culture among Hmong men, assimilation of Hmong people in American culture, the role of education in assimilation, and the role of education as it relates to men in the assimilation process. Becoming part of American culture has been shown to be problematic for traditional Hmong families. These issues, and others, are explored in the findings of this study.

Participants

This study was conducted with 18 Hmong men between the ages of 21 and 33 (refer to Table 3.1). Each of the participants was currently, or had been previously, enrolled in a higher education institution in southeastern Wisconsin. All participants were English proficient, first generation college students.

Table 3.1

Age Range of Hmong Male Participants (in Years)

Age Range	20-23	24-26	27-30	31-33	Total
N	7	4	3	4	18

Interview and Procedures

This project was a study to identify the barriers and cultural influences of the Hmong culture on Hmong men who sought higher education in the United States. All participants were

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informed about the purpose of the study and agreed to contribute their experiences.

Interviews were conducted between April 24 and May 14, 2012. The interview questions were developed to investigate demographic information, perceptions of experiences in higher education, family contributions, cultural and community influences, and gender. During the course of this study, responses and feedback were taken in the form of personal interviews.

Participants were asked 19 questions (see Appendix A) during the interview. The interview sessions were performed live at a designated location on campus. Each interview took approximately 25 minutes. During the interviews, I noted participants' responses in writing. No digital video recording was used during the sessions. After the interviews, follow-up phone calls were made with thirteen participants to clarify some responses in the original interview.

Analysis of Results

The interview data were organized in a spreadsheet and used to analyze the experiences of Hmong men in higher education. The data of the eighteen participants were analyzed for common responses to each question. The results from the data were compared and contrasted to identify the similar and dissimilar experiences of the participants. Common categories reported by participants ranged from family expectations to pursue secondary education, gender responsibilities, and traditional Hmong obligations. The dissimilarity of the results included the age difference of the participants, marital status, and education level.

The questions were posed in such a way as to group answers into specific categories. The majority of questions could be answered with a yes or no, allowing for the results to be easily categorized, yet elaboration on those answers was encouraged. There was ample room for elaboration, but clearly-defined categories emerged from the responses. The information gathered was further dissected by reviewing responses from different age groups. Patterns

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emerged after grouping the data by age ranges, and the results showed that age had a clear impact on the participants' assimilation into American culture, role in the family, and pursuit of higher education.

The information from this study is important because it will enable educational leaders and higher education institutions to be more aware of what Hmong men have experienced bridging two different cultures and will help to identify the common characteristics of Hmong men who are successful in education.

Chapter Four

Results

In this chapter, the results of the study are examined and patterns emerged, allowing information to be grouped upon demographics. The birthplace, level of education attained, and order in the family were found to have an impact on how the participants viewed the influence of their family in general, their family's perception of higher education, experiences in higher education, and assimilation into American culture. After reviewing the categories, it was found that the demographic categories had a significant impact on the overall experience of Hmong men pursuing higher education.

Demographic Results

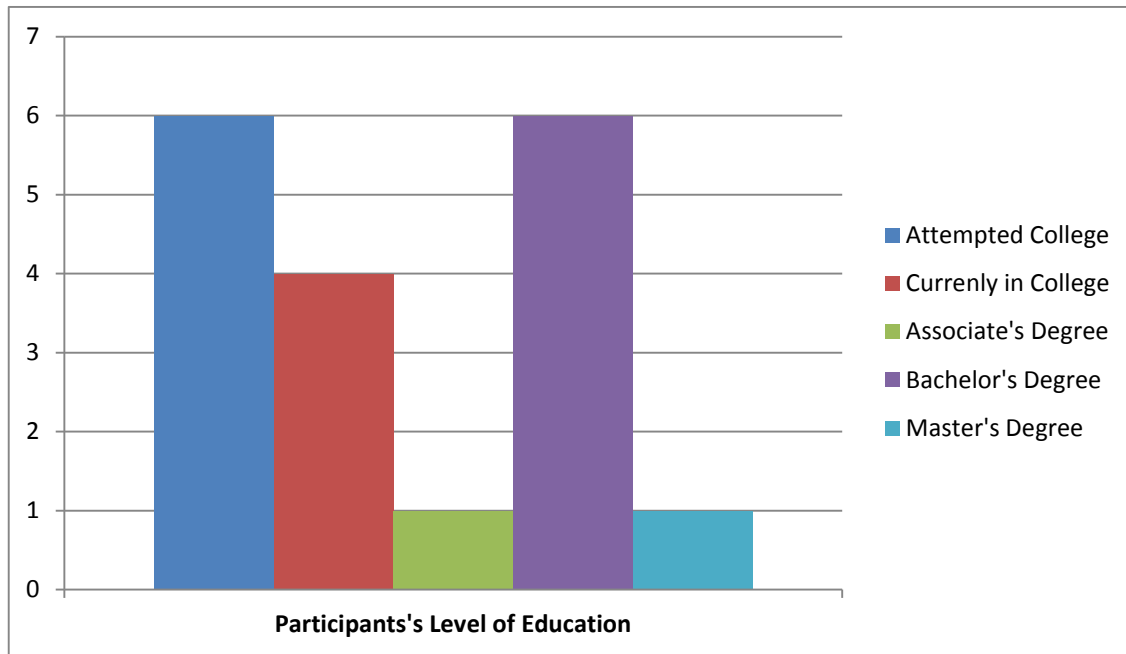
Based on the interview data, seven participants were born outside of the United States and 11 participants were born in the United States. Fifteen participants started school in pre-school, one started in elementary, one started in middle school, and one started in high school. Seventeen participants indicated they were first-generation college students. Only one participant was not a first-generation college student, as one of his parents completed a four-year degree or higher.

When the participants were asked about their level of education, all 18 participants indicated attempts to pursue higher education. One participant reported obtaining a Master's degree, six participants reported obtaining a Bachelor's degree, one had obtained an Associate's degree, four were currently in college, and six had attempted college (refer to Figure 4.1).

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Figure 4.1

Number of Participants at Various Levels of Education



Influence of Family

The Hmong people and culture have always been family orientated. Due to living in rural areas and engaging in agricultural life, large families were the norm. The unit of a Hmong family consists of parents (father, mother, step-mother, and step-father) and siblings (brother, sister, step-brother, and step-sister). Two participants indicated their family size to be one to five people, 11 participants indicated their family size to be six to ten people, and five participants indicated their family size to be 11 or more children. For example, one participant, a third-year student, explained, “my father had two wives and we all live together in one house. There are 14 people in my household. Every morning, I have to prepare my siblings and step-siblings to get ready for school.”

Family order is important in Hmong families. The order of a child in a family determines

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his or her responsibilities and roles within the family. For instance, the oldest son is expected to provide leadership in family decisions and take responsibility for daily chores. Daily chores range from manual labor, and discipline of younger siblings, to participation within the Hmong community. The youngest son, on the other hand, has less influence on family decisions, fewer responsibilities, and often receives the most attention from the parents. From the 18 participants, three were the oldest child, 12 were a middle child, and three were the youngest children. Fifteen participants indicated they had younger siblings and three participants indicated that they did not have any younger siblings. In a Hmong family, the older sibling has to set the bar of achievement, while the youngest have to surpass them. For example, a graduate student described,

Being the youngest; I have to listen to my mother and siblings. The expectations for me are extremely high. Because three of brothers have received their college degree and all of my sisters have received their master's degree. My expectations are to go above and beyond them and receive my Ph.D.

The expectations for older siblings in a family differ, as a third-year student illustrated, "being the oldest son, I always have to be accountable for my younger siblings. My parents would always give me a hard time whenever one of my siblings misbehaved at school." There are some common expectations for Hmong men, regardless of their birth order. Men are encouraged to marry at a young age to start families. The results indicated that out of 18 participants, four individuals were married and fourteen individuals were single.

High school activities are not typically encouraged by Hmong parents. Aside from the Asian clubs and athletic teams in school, many participants did not get involved with other extracurricular activities, clubs, or organizations. When participants were asked about their

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involvement with high school activities besides Asian clubs and athletics, only six participants were involved with other school activities. Twelve participants indicated that they did not join other extracurricular activities, clubs, or organizations.

When asked about college involvement and participation in campus activities besides Asian organizations and athletic involvement, seven participants were involved and eleven were not involved with other student organizations and extracurricular clubs.

Participants' Perceptions of Experiences in Higher Education

Participants were asked about their college experience and the challenges they encountered. Many factors were mentioned as obstacles to higher education (refer to Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Factors Emerging as Obstacles in Pursuit of Higher Education

Factors	Frequency	%
Lack of direction/guidance	15	83
Lack of money	13	72
Lack of study habits/skills	12	66
Poor time management	8	44
Lack of motivation	8	44
Lack of self-confidence	7	38
Other	7	38
Need to care for younger siblings	3	16
Death in family	1	5

Note. The total sample size was $N = 18$.

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Pertaining to college, the majority of participants indicated they decided to pursue a college education as a means of achieving financial stability and respect from the Hmong community. All 18 participants indicated their parents expected them to attend college. Sixteen participants indicated supportive groups like friends and classmates had a positive impact on their education experiences. Only two participants indicated friends and classmates did not have an impact on their education. The lack of college-educated role models at home was an issue for the majority of the participants. Due to the limited education of parents, Hmong men pursuing higher education often enter college without direction and guidance. They often rely on their peers as a form of support group. This is an important finding because having a support group and the right group of friends may help increase the number of graduates.

Community and Culture

Through interactions in the community, Hmong men learn to value their culture and their identity. Self-identity is important and is strongly linked to membership in the clan and the community. For instance, a Hmong child can travel to another distant city and come across a new Hmong family. He or she can be welcomed as an immediate family member depending on his or her clan and community identity. All participants indicated that they have grown up in a Hmong community and family identity is very important to them.

The reputation of the family is essential within the Hmong community. Family reputation comes in many forms such as socio-economic status, education, and work ethic. Each Hmong family belongs to a certain Hmong clan. Among the clans, there is an unspoken competition as well as opportunities to network. For example, Hmong elders and family members of a clan can deny marriage to a man if the woman's family and clan have a negative reputation. Fifteen participants expressed that family reputation matters to them, while only

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three indicated that family reputation does not matter to them. Nine of the eighteen participants indicated the community did influence them to pursue higher education. The other half indicated the community did not have an impact on them at all.

Hmong culture holds a strict belief in gender hierarchy. Family views and expectations are drastically different for men versus women. Men are viewed as superior to women in family matters. With the elders, they have more influence in family events, discussions, and disputes (Gonzalo, 2010). Hmong men are expected to be breadwinners and have more educational accomplishments than women. However, Hmong women are now able to take advantage of educational opportunities, and thus change their social status (Lee, 2005). Only three out of 18 participants felt that their male gender impacted their education.

The results showed that Hmong men in higher education set a higher value on the importance of education. A Hmong family takes a lot of pride in their sons pursuing higher education and parents are very supportive of their sons attending college. While away at college, the majority of the participants still have significant roles and responsibilities to play within their families. The families have high expectations for academic success, and expect their children to be good examples for the family and throughout the community. Some traditional families require contribution and attendance at traditional Hmong rituals and customs. While away at college, some Hmong men still play the role of caretakers for younger siblings.

According to the students interviewed, the results suggest that Hmong men in this study are slowly assimilating into the mainstream of higher education. The English language was not found to be a major barrier for these Hmong participants. However, half of the participants expressed difficulties in reading and writing. The participants indicated the leading factor in difficulties in reading and writing was due to the lack of English language usage at home.

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Twelve participants mentioned that in comparison to their classmates, more time and effort was required to comprehend the reading coursework.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research indicated that Hmong men who are pursuing higher education in southeastern Wisconsin still have many obstacles and challenges to overcome within their respective communities and families. The participants in this research have achieved at least a high school diploma and have attempted to pursue higher education after high school. The participants have acknowledged the supportive services from different higher education institutions. However, some participants had to discontinue the pursuit of a degree due to family and cultural situations. Nevertheless, education remains a high priority to all of the participants.

The main challenges participants described for succeeding in higher education were lack of direction/guidance, money, study habits, time management, and motivation. All of these obstacles are related to family disadvantages and cultural influences. In addition, many Hmong parents did not have any specific plans for their children after high school. They only encouraged their children to continue their education and study in academic fields where they would be able to find jobs after they graduated.

Finding a solution to the barriers of cultural and family influences for Hmong men in higher education remains a difficult task. However, as the Hmong families assimilate more into mainstream America, Hmong men who pursue higher education are influenced less by the traditional roles and expectations of Hmong culture. Despite the struggles of the early Hmong men, the younger generations of Hmong men are determined to strive for academic excellence.

Limitations

There are a few limitations that should be noted in this study. First of all, the data include only a small population of Hmong men in southeastern Wisconsin. The outcomes do not account

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for every Hmong man. Second, due to sensitivity of academic performances, the participants were not able to express their overall experiences in higher education. Some participants were private about their academic performances. Lastly, some participants were uncomfortable sharing their family experiences in the United States. A few of the participants felt their family did not fit the norm of American society. For example, some participants expressed their fathers married two wives. Despite the limitations, this study has helped acknowledge the cultural and family influence on Hmong men who are pursuing higher education.

Recommendations

Future research efforts should take these limitations into consideration. Cultural and family influences do affect Hmong men's experiences in a higher education setting; however, the cultural and family gaps do not necessarily lead to academic failure. More research is also needed to evaluate the supportive services on college campuses for first-generation college students, such as Hmong, who already confront many challenges when they enter college.

Some of the questions that could be explored in future investigations are 1) how well do Hmong men's views coincide with their parents' perceptions, 2) for Hmong men who have succeeded in higher education, what support systems currently in place are working, and 3) what services and support systems, whether in primary or secondary educational institutions, are lacking or missing from the current educational system?

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Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Appendix A

1. How old are you?
2. What is the highest level of education you've attained?
3. Are you a first-generation college student? If not, what is the highest level of education your parents have attained?
4. How many people are in your family?
5. What is your marital status?
6. Did you grow up in a Hmong community?
7. Did you participate in any high school activities? If yes, what kind of activities?
8. Did you participate in any college activities? If yes, what kind of activities?
9. Were you born outside of the United States? If yes, what grade did you start school?
10. What order are you in your family? (For example: oldest, middle, or youngest)
11. What college major are you pursuing and why did you choose that particular major?
12. What is your role in your family and what expectations are placed upon you?
13. Does your family reputation matter to you?
14. During your college career, what challenges did you experience?
15. How does culture impact your life?
16. Did you the Hmong community impact your life in anyway?
17. Do you believe that gender has an impact on your education? If so, how?
18. Do you believe your friends have an impact on your education? If so, how?
19. Do you have younger siblings? If yes, are there expectations placed on you by your family? How do those expectations influence your education?