

1-9-2026

## Cultural Influences Experienced by Self-Identified Hmong College Students

Nkajntsa Lovy Lee  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Health

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Nkaujntsa Lee

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Jeanna Jacobsen, Committee Chairperson,  
Social Work Faculty

Dr. Alice Yick, Committee Member,  
Social Work Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2026

Abstract

Cultural Influences Experienced by Self-Identified Hmong College Students

by

Nkaujntsa Lee

MSW, Augsburg University, 2018

BSW, Augsburg University, 2017

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Work

Walden University

February 2026

## Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore how self-identified Hmong college students aged 18–24 perceived their culture's influence on their academic experiences. The study examined the relationships shaping individual identity and their effects on academic pursuits. A basic qualitative inquiry approach was used to interview ten Hmong undergraduate students enrolled in colleges across the United States. Semi-structured interviews facilitated data collection guided by the ecological systems theory, while thematic analysis and inductive coding were employed to identify patterns and develop themes from the data. The themes identified in the study were family as the central influence, negotiating conflicting expectations, education as a dual obligation, gendered cultural norms, and historical and generational legacy. Findings revealed that support, encouragement, and open-mindedness from family, peers, and the community play significant roles in motivating Hmong students to pursue higher education. Additionally, traditional gender expectations within Hmong culture were identified as barriers to academic success, emphasizing the need for cultural shifts to enhance educational experiences. These insights highlight the importance of developing tailored support systems to address the unique challenges faced by Hmong students. The study aims to contribute to positive social change by informing social workers, educators, administrators, and other stakeholders about cultural barriers to academic success, fostering improved resources and support for Hmong college students.

Cultural Influences Experienced by Self-identified Hmong College Students

by

Nkaujntsa Lee

MSW, Augsburg University, 2018

BSW, Augsburg University, 2017

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Work

Walden University

February 2026

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to my family, children, husband, and parents. To my family, you provided strength in times of hardship. To my children, you all are my motivation to do better and be better. To my husband, this would be impossible without you. Thank you for all the support through this journey as we grow together. To my parents, without your foundation, constant reminders, and check-ins, I would not have come this far in life.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study .....	1
Background .....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	3
Nature of Study.....	4
Definitions.....	5
Assumptions .....	6
Scope and Delimitation.....	8
Limitations .....	9
Significance.....	9
Summary .....	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	12
Search Strategy .....	13
Theoretical Framework.....	15
Ecological Systems Theory .....	15
Microsystem .....	16
Mesosystem .....	17
Exosystem.....	18
Macrosystem.....	18
Chronosystem .....	19

Literature Review .....	19
Hmong Cultural Values and Practices .....	20
Southeast Asian Immigration Experience .....	21
Hmong People and The United States .....	22
Hmong Family Expectations .....	33
Hmong People in Higher Education .....	38
Limitation of Current Research .....	41
Conclusion.....	42
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	43
Research Design and Rationale .....	43
Role of Researcher.....	45
Methodology .....	47
Participant Selection Logic.....	47
Instrumentation .....	48
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	49
Data Analysis.....	52
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	55
Credibility.....	55
Transferability.....	56
Dependability.....	57
Confirmability.....	57
Ethical Procedures .....	58

Summary .....	59
Chapter 4: Results.....	61
Introduction .....	61
Setting .....	62
Demographics.....	62
Data Collection.....	64
Data Analysis .....	66
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	69
Credibility.....	69
Transferability.....	70
Dependability.....	72
Confirmability.....	72
Results.....	72
Family as the Central Influence (Microsystem) .....	74
Negotiating Conflicting Expectations (Mesosystem) .....	76
Educational Aspirations and Pressures (Exosystem) .....	78
Gendered Cultural Norms (Macrosystem) .....	80
Historical and Generational Legacy (Chronosystem).....	83
Summary .....	84
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	86
Introduction .....	86
Interpretations of the Findings .....	88

Family as the Central Influence (Microsystem) .....	88
Negotiating Conflicting Expectations (Mesosystem) .....	89
Education as a Dual Obligation (Exosystem).....	90
Gendered Cultural Norms (Macrosystem) .....	91
Historical and Generational Legacy (Chronosystem).....	92
Limitations of the Study.....	93
Recommendations.....	95
Implications .....	98
Conclusion.....	100
References.....	103
Appendix: Interview Guide.....	125

## List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information .....	64
Table 2. Coding Process and Theme Development .....	68
Table 3. Initial Coding, Final Themes, and Participant Examples.....	72

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

I sought to understand how Hmong individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who were currently enrolled in a 4-year college perceived the influence of their Hmong culture on their academic experience. The findings from this study provided information for a better understanding of how culture influenced the experiences of Hmong students in college. The research findings could contribute to positive social change by informing social workers, professors, educational administrators, and other stakeholders about the possible services and support needed to help self-identified Hmong 18 and 24-year-old college students. This chapter reviews the background, purpose, framework, assumptions, limitations, and scope of this research study relating to cultural influences experienced by Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24.

### **Background**

It is estimated that less than 14% of Hmong college students graduated with a college degree in the United States, compared to a national average college graduation rate of 29.6% (Progress, 2050, 2015). One of the possible reasons the Hmong community is behind in college graduation rates is their struggle to assimilate into the United States (Toft & Ducklow, 2019). Hmong people are a small Asian ethnic community who sought refuge in the United States during the Vietnam War (Vue, 2015). Due to a lack of access to resources, Hmong people were below the national average in education, socioeconomic status, had language barriers, had different cultural and family obligations, and had untreated mental health conditions (Vue, 2021). When comparing

Hmong students to their peers, Hmong students were at a higher risk of being unsuccessful in school (Progress 2050, 2015). The data indicated that there appeared to be unique cultural influences affecting the college experience of Hmong students.

### **Problem Statement**

Although researchers had investigated issues around the topic of educational barriers for the Hmong population, the research had not explicitly investigated how the Hmong culture influenced academic experiences (Ducklow et al., 2019). Many studies of the Hmong community focused on immigration experiences, traumatic events, mental health, spiritual healing, culture, and traditions. The research identified these experiences as major factors in educational attainment in that an individual's interpretation of these events could affect educational outcomes (Carmen, 2015). However, current research did not help to understand the ways in which the Hmong cultural values, beliefs, and familial cultural expectations influence a student's college experience. Research around these experiences would help add to knowledge about how culture impacts higher education experiences. Research indicated that culture had been identified as a potential barrier in some cases, while it provided support in others (Lor, 2018). Researchers needed to explore how and in what ways Hmong culture influenced academic experience to promote social change, allow collaboration, and advocacy for policies to improve social well-being. Social change could be promoted by collaborating with leaders, agencies, and universities to advocate for policies and programs that advance the economic and social well-being of a culturally diverse clientele.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The research explored what self-identified Hmong college students between the ages 18 and 24 shared about how their Hmong culture influenced their educational experience through an interpretivist approach. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 described Hmong cultural influences on their experiences of college. An interpretivist approach allowed the exploration of the higher education experiences of the participants through their individual interpretations of their reality by focusing on their beliefs and motivations (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The concept of this study was to examine the relationship between culture and academic experience from the participants' perspective rather than the interpretation of the researchers.

### **Research Question**

How do self-identified Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24 describe how their Hmong culture influences their academic experience?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework grounding this study was the ecological systems theory. The ecological systems theory helped explore the different systems individuals were involved with, including micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This theory aided in exploring how the different systems influenced individual experience. For example, by examining the role that a student played as the son/daughter in their immediate household, researchers could explore their responsibilities and roles in the greater society (Patton, 2015).

Through ecological systems theory, various systems that Hmong students were a part of were identified as systems that influenced individual experiences. These relationships included the different systems they were involved with, such as social groups, family, school, work, and community. The ecological systems theory guided the exploration of how each system connected with one another. Additionally, it explored how culture influenced the systems and interactions between systems, and how that influenced the student's relationship with their academic experience. Providing both a broad and a more focused perspective of experiences helped gather more information on cultural influences.

### **Nature of Study**

To address the research questions, specific research techniques were utilized to design a basic qualitative research study in which individual, in-depth interviews and reflections were employed. Using basic qualitative inquiry, researchers observed, interviewed, reflected, and interpreted the data they collected to analyze the results received (Patton, 2015).

In-depth interviews with self-identified Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24 were conducted to gather information on how participants described how culture influenced their experience of college. These interviews were transcribed for data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyze interview transcripts to allow detailed descriptions of cultural experiences, feelings, and perceptions to emerge. Coding was employed in data analysis for this study to categorize and find common themes from each

participant's interview (Ravitch et al., 2016). Codes were developed after the interviews to identify common themes by reviewing the participants' responses.

To ensure trustworthiness, personal biases and stereotypes were addressed and excluded by utilizing peer debriefing and reviewing the interview questions for in-person interviews (Swick & Williams, 2006). Through individual interviews, the experiences of the participants were observed, and follow-up questions were asked to confirm how they connected with their different systems. Ecological systems theory was used to guide this qualitative research to help evaluate all relationships the individuals were engaged in. This provided information on how one relationship influenced another (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). I used this research design to explore how students' culture influenced their college experiences.

### **Definitions**

Culture was defined as the attitudes, behaviors, customs, beliefs, and practices of a specific group or people (Vang, 2016). For the purpose of this research, I specifically examined the Hmong culture. Defining culture was important for this study because of the different contexts in which culture was created (family, school, community). For my study, the focus was on the influence of Hmong culture on 18 and 24-year-olds within the broader culture of the United States and college systems.

In this study, cultural influence was defined as the Hmong college students' cultural experiences in different systems they were involved in, which influenced how they engaged in their academics (Ngo, 2017). Social behaviors that Hmong college students experienced might have varied depending on how they interpreted the different

relationships they had (Lor, 2013). Cultural influence could have meant different things to everyone; however, for this study specifically, it was the described experiences of self-identified Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24. College in this study was defined as any 4-year undergraduate program.

Another key concept was academic experience. Academic experience in my study was defined as any experience, professional or personal, that occurred at an academic institution (Ngo, 2017). This included extracurricular activities and campus life as well. Defining academic experience was important because this study attempted to contribute knowledge to the overall academic experience of future students. Perspectives of academic experience in relation to culture were assumed to have varied according to the individual (Dukhan et al., 2012). Thus, Hmong culture would have had a unique relation to academic experience.

Finally, college students in the context of this study were defined as traditional students aged 18 to 24 (Uy, 2015). Although Hmong college students could have included a much broader age range, this specific age range was selected to focus on the traditional college student. It was important to define this concept because it would have been more reflective of the overall Hmong college student population and provided more accurate information about the potential impacts that education had for affecting social and economic outcomes for this age range (Ngo, 2017).

### **Assumptions**

The first assumption I held was that the Hmong culture would have an influence on an individual's academic experience because the literature suggested that Hmong

college students had high responsibilities and obligations to activities outside of their academics (Kwan, 2015). This assumption occurred because of the interconnectedness of the Hmong culture with the lifestyle of individuals who identified as Hmong. These individuals experienced traditional culture in similar ways (Vang, 2016). Additionally, traditional Hmong culture could influence the decisions of Hmong individuals and the choices they made throughout their lives. To check this bias, I actively looked for disconfirming evidence that Hmong culture had no influence on academic experience.

Another assumption was that Hmong students had a mix of both eastern culture and western culture as a result of living in the United States. In comparison, the two cultures and their expectations could be very different. Because of this, I assumed that understanding and communication between the two cultures for Hmong college students might have influenced academic experience. This assumption was important to identify because not all Hmong college students identified the same way with eastern and western lifestyle. Self-identifying as Hmong did not establish the degree of cultural affiliation or practice. It was, therefore, important for me to examine the influence of culture on the different systems in the ways participants described.

Lastly, it was assumed that all Hmong college students had experiences with their Hmong culture that had some degree of conflict with their college culture. It could have been possible that Hmong students did not experience any conflict between their culture and academics. This assumption was necessary for the context of the study in that it was assumed culture had some effect on academics. A final assumption of the study was that Hmong students who had more trouble with the English language were more connected

to the Hmong culture. It was assumed that students had a more difficult time adjusting to a new language and culture because the Hmong language and culture were already deeply ingrained into the individual. The assumption was that it would have been more difficult for Hmong students to adjust to a different culture than their own. This assumption was important in the context of the study because the ways in which students processed language could have been a barrier to the success of Hmong college students.

### **Scope and Delimitation**

The research questions explored how Hmong culture influenced self-identified Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24. Helping Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 succeed in higher education was crucial for their future academic success. This topic was chosen because it was important to understand how Hmong culture influenced the education experiences of self-identified Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24.

For the purpose of this study, I included Hmong individuals aged 18 to 24 who were currently enrolled in college. By including only students who identified as Hmong, I excluded all other student populations. My study included Hmong students who were current college students to provide a picture of how Hmong culture affected current college experiences for traditional Hmong students. The inclusion of college students above the age of 24 or individuals not actively enrolled students would not have provided the study with information about current Hmong culture and college experiences.

This research provided detailed descriptive information about the Hmong culture of current college students and how it affected their academic experiences. The

homogenous demographics of my participants and the virtual participant recruitment process made transferability narrower. Participants self-identifying as Hmong meant that although the study could be applied more broadly to the Southeast Asian population, it pertains specifically to the Hmong population. Additionally, the virtual recruitment process limited participants to those who had access to and frequented virtual spaces. In terms of transferability, this would allow more participants to participate in future studies without the constraints of time, availability, and space. The individual interpretation of customs, beliefs, and practices and their effects on higher education experiences were elements to consider in the transferability of my study. The differences in interpretations from person to person could possibly have resulted in findings that did not reflect the larger population, as individuals who volunteered could have shared about their cultural influences because they believed it influenced their academic experience.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of my study include the participant selection process and how it was completed virtually. This limited participants to individuals who were familiar with technology and utilized social media platforms. For the inclusion criteria of Hmong individuals, participants only self-reported their Hmong ethnicity, without providing additional information about a possible mixed or multicultural identity. I attempted to recruit an equal number of both male and female participants to better represent the population.

### **Significance**

The findings from this study will produce information about how Hmong culture

influences the experiences of Hmong individuals enrolled in college. The goal is to publish and share the findings with stakeholders who can become more aware of how they can better provide services to Hmong students and young Hmong adults. Anyone working in higher education and in the social services field will be able to use the produced knowledge from my study to form and provide services to help support Hmong students. Another stakeholder who will benefit from this study will be the Hmong community itself. By exploring how culture can influence higher education experiences, the Hmong community can utilize findings from the study to evaluate how their culture can improve academic performance. The research findings could contribute to positive social change by informing social workers, professors, educational administrators, and other stakeholders about the possible cultural barriers of academic experience, which could be used to develop services and support for Hmong college students.

### **Summary**

The study explored how culture influenced the experiences of Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24 in higher education by providing background information on the Hmong people and their culture, tracing their immigration story to the United States, and exploring the resources available to them. The ecological systems theory was utilized to explore micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystems to understand how the different systems influenced individual experiences. This chapter also defined cultural influence, culture, academic experience, and Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 to provide clear definitions of the concepts used in the study and determined the scope of the study to include an understanding of cultural influence on

higher education. Although limitations included technology-dependent recruitment strategies and self-reported inclusion criteria, the information gained from this study will provide a better understanding of how Hmong culture influences academic experiences.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The topic of the dissertation is exploring how Hmong individuals enrolled in college describe the influence of their Hmong culture on their academic experience. The two variables observed in this study include 4-year traditional undergraduate students aged 18 to 24 and Hmong culture. Throughout this study, I use ecological systems to identify how different ecological systems are interconnected and influenced the Hmong student experience.

Higher education is perceived to be especially important in the Hmong community because of their perception of education leading to socioeconomic mobility (Ducklow et al., 2019). Although some first-generation Hmong immigrants completed American high school, many feel they cannot pursue college degrees (Lor, 2018). However, the pressure to improve socioeconomic class is placed on Hmong individuals and their pursuits of higher education (Ngo, 2017). Additionally, the relationship between culture and Hmong students that develop through interactions such as with helping to translate English for parents, had positive effects on academic persistence (Omori et al., 2019). Translating, or language brokering, involves a complex understanding of culture that goes beyond literal translations. This balance of traditional Hmong cultures and American culture often helped the students feel more independent and motivated students to further their education to address shortfalls with translating English (Omori et al., 2019). Although differences in acculturation at times created frustrating situations for students and their parents, overall, these are factors that contribute to the decision-making about post-secondary education (Berry, 1997).

Influences of a generation rooted in eastern tradition and culture mixed with western culture could potentially affect the higher education experiences of Hmong students. Hmong college students falling behind in graduation rates compared to their peers is an issue that needs to be evaluated (Carmen, 2015). To understand if culture plays a role in the learning experiences for Hmong college students, it would be essential to look into the different systems each individual is a part of. The ecological systems theory explores the individual in their environments from one level to the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Understanding the experiences of Hmong college students between the ages 18 and 24 through the ecological systems theory lens can help to provide insights about events that shaped the individual's decisions with higher education.

The many different factors of one's environment have the ability to shape and create an individual's future. This issue is important to social work because of the role that social workers play in advocating for change and social justice. By trying to better understand how a community and its current culture affects its next generation, social workers can provide insights into issues affecting the community and how to improve society.

### **Search Strategy**

Key concepts were used during the search process to ensure that the words and phrases aligned with the research topic. Examples of the keywords and phrases used to look up journals and articles include Culture, Hmong students, Higher Education, Southeast Asian Communities, Immigration, and Graduation. Keywords are used in

combination with each other such as Hmong Students and Education. The identified keywords were looked up through multiple databases such as the UNESCO Documents Database, ProQuest, and Google Scholar.

Database searches on recent experiences of Hmong students and education were limited to at least five years; however, research on Hmong background, traditions, and culture included older literature to establish a sociohistorical understanding of Hmong experiences. In addition to this, it was challenging to locate more current peer-reviewed journals and articles on Hmong experiences. Peer-reviewed research surrounding the Hmong population first began in the late 1970s, focusing on Hmong physical health and refugee experiences. The research then shifted to spirituality and mental health, eventually including cultural and traditional experiences in the late 1990s. Although not explicitly stated, culture and tradition are closely tied into almost every aspect of research around the Hmong experience. The utilization of older articles to explain the historical experiences of the Hmong people and War, Trauma, culture, and beliefs are to show how those experiences translate to current experiences. Establishing background information on the experiences of Hmong people is important for further exploration of educational experiences because of how these experiences are ingrained in the culture of the Hmong community. Current research focuses on Hmong people's history and background experiences adjusting to life in the United States. Although much of the current research centers around immigration, traumatic life experiences, and historical challenges that the Hmong population faced. Research does not detail how their experience affects or influences Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 in the United States.

Another strategy used to find articles related to my topic was citation chaining. This strategy helped to streamline my search for resources to support my topic. Citation chaining also helped identify research that I would have otherwise not considered and helped explain how an author builds their research. Seminal literature came in the form of reviewing the dissertations of other researchers. Although limited literature about the community exists, much of the articles reflect today's experiences. This is, of course, another reason why additional research on the Hmong community and educational experiences is still needed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used to guide this study was the ecological systems theory. This theoretical framework helps guide the research by exploring potential cultural influences at different levels of systems on Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 and how this influences their college experience.

#### **Ecological Systems Theory**

The theoretical framework supporting this study is the ecological systems theory. The ecological systems theory evaluates the upbringing of individuals and how they are raised in their communities and families (Ecological systems theory, 2020). This theory explores the various relationships and systems students are involved in (Ozaki et al., 2020). The ecological systems theory consists of the micro-system, exo-system, meso-system, macro-system, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explores how external systems affect individuals. Bronfenbrenner seeks different levels and perspectives of the broader systems through

each system listed, narrowing them down to the closest system individuals or families are involved in. The engagement individuals have, and the relationships they build with different systems in their life can change how they react or behave toward others (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Through each system in the ecological systems theory, viewing the individual in their immediate environment compared to their larger environment can help identify how each system influences the other. Viewing the Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 and their systems can help identify how culture influences them through interaction within the various systems and ultimately how that then influences their academic experience.

### **Microsystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1977) explored the direct relationship individuals have with other individuals such as their mother, father, sister, brother, teacher, or friend. The microsystem can include an individual's immediate family, their relationship with each family member, and friends they have a relationship with (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). The influence individuals receive from others in their microsystem can change how they behave or grow, and at the same time, they can influence others as well (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Bronfenbrenner's theory shares that if individuals are being treated negatively, there is a high chance that they would treat others similarly (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An example of how culture can influence education in the microsystem is prevalent in the different relationships with the Hmong college student. How Hmong students are treated at home may influence their values and beliefs at school. If parents do not value deadlines or structure, equivalent to turning in assignments or studying, the Hmong college student

may not have these values which are essential to higher educational success. According to Ozaki (2020), an individual's perception of themselves as student learners are influenced by the intersection of their microsystems. Ozaki suggests that the expectations of the student's community impact their persistence in higher education either negatively or positively depending on the community's opinion on education.

### **Mesosystem**

The mesosystem views the relationship each microsystem has with the other. The relationship the individual's microsystems have with another influence how the individual behaves (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For example, the peers of the Hmong college student might prefer to study at a specific time of the day which might not work for their family's schedule at home. The Hmong students may not be able to study with their peers due to family obligations. On the other hand, if the student chooses to study, they may lose connections with their family. This peer influence could impact how the student performs in the course due to a lack of support (Lauren, 2023). Additionally, the literature suggests that parental involvement at the mesosystems level provides a way to encourage participation and promote positive student development (Mayra et al., 2022). The relationship building aspect at the mesosystems level creates opportunities for students to develop and take action for lasting change in their community. The microsystems interacting with each other include the peer group and family of the Hmong college student.

**Exosystem**

In the ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner includes the exosystem as the relationship an individual's microsystems have with others that do not directly relate to the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). This can include the relationship between parents and parents' relationships and involvement in the broader Hmong community. Although each microsystem's relationships to their systems do not include the Hmong college student specifically, it can influence how one behaves towards the student (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An example of how culture may influence the educational experience of Hmong students in the exosystem can be how the culture views education as a very positive thing (Lee, 2017). Looking through an exosystem lens, the educational experience for Hmong students may be influenced by the community they live in and how the community values academics (Lor, 2008).

**Macrosystem**

The macrosystem in the ecological systems theory views the individual through the lens of culture and how they grew up (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This can include the socioeconomic system they grew up in, the ethnicity they identify as, their location, and the religion they grew up with. The macrosystem is different from the other systems because it includes factors that existed before the individual (Bronfenbrenner 1977). The Hmong culture exists alongside U.S cultures and experiences. The literature suggests that the macrosystem level of the Hmong student takes into account a belief system provided by the micro, meso, and exo systems levels to create their views on particular subjects

like higher education (Gessler et al., 2021). This research study can help understand how Hmong culture influences Hmong college students in higher education in the U.S.

### **Chronosystem**

The chronosystem is the last level of the ecological systems theory. In the chronosystem, individuals are viewed through the different environmental changes they experience throughout their life. These changes are known as major life transitions and/or historical events during an individual's lifetime (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In the chronosystem, these changes influence the behaviors of individuals from one event to another and how their relationships develop over time. Examples of culturally specific life transitions include marriage or the birth of a child. These are important milestones in which students develop a sense of identity and independence and explore the different life choices (Vang, 2014). The changes in life stages for the Hmong students and learning how to successfully navigate their chronosystem could influence how they perceive higher education (Zhan, 2020). The culture of the Hmong student may play a role in the decisions they make in their future by themselves (Han, 2022).

### **Literature Review**

The literature review presents these subjects to establish background information about the culture of the Hmong people, who they are, and where they came from. The literature review will first introduce research on the immigration experiences of the Hmong people from Southeast Asia to the United States. This section will explore how Hmong people adjust to the society and culture of the United States in conjunction with the Hmong culture, traditions, and family expectations.

## **Hmong Cultural Values and Practices**

Before diving deeper into the main parts of this research topic, it is important to know the context of cultural values and practices among the Hmong people. Most Hmong families are very closely knit, which can be seen through their cultural values and traditions over the centuries (Ngo, 2017). Major cultural practices have only included a few events, such as funerals, animal sacrifice, weddings, and agricultural traditions (DeSantiago, 2020). Through these practices, Hmong people can share their spiritual healing and sharing values. This is done by inviting family and friends to celebrate major milestones or support the health of sick and loved ones (Plotnikoff, 2002). Values and milestones which can include education and transitioning into adulthood associated with going to college (Pagulayan, 2021).

Hmong students' values growing up with their families can impact their perceptions and experiences (Juang et al., 2015). These can be values and practices taught by their parents, impacting their values and educational experiences. In the Hmong community, children need to listen to their parents, especially their father (Ngo, 2017). In many Hmong families, the father mainly falls into the dominant role as the head of the household. In many cases, such as in the example Ngo (2017) provided, parents expect their children to continue to the Hmong cultural values and traditions, yet also expect them to attain higher education (pp. 462). Being taught to value Hmong cultural values and practices by maintaining a mindset focused on past experiences while being expected to learn and take in a new culture can be a burden. In some cases, some Hmong students may not want to "fail" their parents by not meeting their expectations (Dukhan, 2012).

These expectations can influence Hmong students' effort in their educational goals or cultural traditions and practices (Ngo, 2017).

### **Southeast Asian Immigration Experience**

Before giving critical exploration of the problem of concern, it is important to give some context for the Southeast Asian experience in the U.S. in general, and for the Hmong community specifically. This will help to establish then the role culture and values play when it comes to college success of Hmong students.

In the mid to late 1970s, many Southeast Asians sought refuge in the United States due to political changes in their own countries (Perlman, 2020). In their immigration journey from Southeast Asia to the United States, many individuals and families faced traumatic experiences making it harder to adjust to the lifestyle of the United States (Tatman, 2004). Some Southeast Asian communities that immigrated in the mid-1970s included Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, and Hmong people. The Hmong community in the U.S started with roughly 12,000 immigrants in the late 70's and grew steadily, reaching 200,000 by 1998 (Vang & Flores, 1999). This immigration experience could be a part of the chronosystem in a Hmong college student's life. Pressures from human rights groups also helped increase the Southeast Asian population (Dentice, 2020).

Children of immigrants make up a larger population in the United States than ever before. Due to the rapid growth of the Asian community in such a short time, there is limited research on specific ethnic groups within the Asian population. The Southeast Asian community has faced many challenges adjusting to the societal culture in the

United States while balancing their own ethnic cultures (Lee et al., 2017). Due to limited English, education, and job skills, it has been challenging for many Southeast Asian communities to be successful in the U.S. (Paik et al., 2014).

Major life transitions from one country to another can influence the values and views on life in the United States. For the Hmong people and other Southeast Asian communities, permanent immigration to the United States was a life-changing event (e.g., a major event in the chronosystem that continues to influence the individual behavior of those who experienced it). It is important to know some history of the Hmong community and how migration to the United States looked like for them and other Southeast Asian communities. This is a part of the chronosystem. Massive relocation of the living environment could have long-term effects on future generations.

### **Hmong People and The United States**

Focusing on the lived experiences of Hmong people and how they adjusted to the United States can provide a better understanding of what Hmong students may be experiencing today (Lee, 2009). Although first, second, or third-generation Hmong students may not have experienced war or trauma relating to immigration or relocation themselves, what their parents and grandparents experienced may influence their personal experiences in the United States (Franzen-Castle, 2013). It is important to know how Hmong people came to the United States and how they have adjusted over the last few decades. Learning more about the history of the Hmong people can help understand where Hmong students may come from based on intergenerational experiences (Tatman 2004). Moving to the United States is a huge change for the Hmong community and this

may play a part of the Hmong college student's chronosystem guided by the ecological systems theory (Berry, 1997).

### ***Immigration to the United States***

When discussing the history of the Hmong people and their origins, there are many myths, stories, and verbal exchanges of where the people started their journey (Lee, 2007). However, the Hmong and United States history can be dated back to the Vietnam War (Vue, 2015). The Vietnam War was one of the first interactions between the U.S. government and the Hmong community. The United States recruited Hmong people in the 1960s to fight during the Vietnam War because of their expertise and knowledge of the terrain and adversaries (Vue, 2015). During this time, most Hmong people lived in Laos and Thailand, where they settled from previous conflicts with other countries such as China (Michaud, 1997).

After the United States' withdrawal from the Vietnam War, the Hmong people fled to different countries for fear of persecution, with many settling in the United States. An estimated 130,000 Hmong refugees settled in the United States after the Vietnam War between 1975 to 1996 (Goodkind, 2006). The adjustment to a "new life" was not simple, as there were major differences in culture, language, and belief systems that created major challenges for the Hmong community (Tatman, 2004). This may be a limitation to the lived experiences for parents of Hmong students on a chronosystem level, as it influences how they connect and communicate with their children (Omori, 2019). Adjusting to the western culture was especially hard because Hmong people were limited in education, technical skills and had limited access to transportation (Areba et al., 2021).

Despite cultural differences and challenges, the Hmong people learned and grew with other ethnic groups (Minnesota et al., 1984).

The changes and transitions throughout history may have influenced how Hmong people value their culture and experiences in the United States. Bronfenbrenner (1977) shares that an existing community and the events that happen to them can change how new communities move forward. For example, a Hmong student with already established values and ethics attending a university with different values and missions can change how they view their career or personal life decisions (Han, 2022). Major events throughout history can have different changes and effects on individuals (Lor, 2008). The refugee and immigration experience for the Hmong community may have strengthened their determination to practice and maintain their culture in the United States (Berry, 1997).

### ***Acculturation***

Upon coming to the United States, acculturation was challenging as Hmong people faced trauma during the war and were forced into refugee camps (Lor, 2018). When Hmong people arrived in the United States, there were not many supportive services to accommodate their cultural needs (Slobodin et al., 2015). For example, mental health services could not support the Hmong community due to the lack of communication and understanding of traumatic experiences between the Hmong culture and mental health service providers (Areba et al., 2021). These challenges carry over into the following generations, with providers not equipped to recognize and address the

needs of the Hmong community, whose origins in the United States stem from war (Vue, 2021).

Acculturation has been defined as a process of cultural and psychological change that comes from the interaction of different cultural societies (Berry, 1997). The acculturation framework presents different ways in which a group can either assimilate, separate, integrate, or be marginalized in the more dominant culture (Berry, 1997). This acculturation framework can be utilized to explore the experiences of our sample population regarding culture, academic success, and challenges to better understand the role of their values, identity, and beliefs. A study by Oxford University exploring the relationship between acculturation and smoking behaviors showed that linguistic isolation and new social norms associated with acculturation increased smoking among Hmong participants (Constantine et al., 2010). The study highlights an association between acculturation and social norms such as with substance use and lower educational attainments. Additionally, the study found that services around assisting with education were also limited when presented with linguistic isolation. This is one example of how an aspect of acculturation can have effects on the individuals' life choices and decisions.

The Hmong people are often grouped with other Southeast Asian American groups, falling into the model minority myth that all Asians performed well academically (Chiang et al., 2015). One might argue then that factors such as a lack of mental health and academic support services highlight the importance of visibility for Hmong students specifically (Xiong, 2018). Adjusting to the United States culture was hard on Hmong people, especially for the first immigrants who arrived and first-generation children

(Watt, 2008). Watt (2008) argues that those born in a different country have to change their old habits and adjust to a new lifestyle. The culture is completely different for the Hmong people, depending on where they immigrated. For example, Hopp (2022) found that assimilation was different for Hmong people who settled in France than Hmong people who settled in the United States due to different cultures and societies. The culture in the United States provided Hmong American women with leadership roles and opportunities such as education that were unseen in traditional Hmong culture (Miyares, 1997).

The individual experiences Hmong people have in adjusting to life in the United States may not be easy to understand (Lee, 2009). Adapting to a larger existing community can be difficult and challenging for individuals or groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This is important to consider for Hmong students because the impact of immigration and adjusting to a new culture can negatively impact second and third-generation students (Berry, 1997). With the emerging first-generation Hmong students in the U.S now attending college, it would be important to learn about how their cultural and social experiences interact as it pertains to their academic success (Toft, 2019). For these reasons, parental pressures to assimilate while also maintaining traditional practices require more research (Omori et al., 2019).

Today, educators have a general knowledge of the historical narratives of the Hmong people and their refugee experiences (Endo, 2017). However, even in generations that are far removed from refugee experiences, it is difficult for educators to separate students from the traumatic experiences of Hmong elders (Endo, 2017). Students who

struggle to succeed in western academics frame themselves as failures, often feeling that they should be doing better because they did not experience traumas firsthand like their parents (Vang, 2013). As such, it is also difficult for educators to separate the students from the experiences of their elders, often noting the traumatic experiences of the Hmong people as reasons for why students are struggling (Vang, 2013).

Transitioning from understanding generally who the Hmong people were into understanding who they are currently is crucial to this study (Tan, 2019). This will help to provide a deeper understanding of what Hmong students may experience currently as they navigate their cultural values, traditions, and practices while in traditionally different environments from their elders (Ngo, 2017). Considering the challenges associated with acculturation and the impact this has on the current generation of Hmong college students, the research suggests parental support and encouragement, institutional resources, and financial situations present themselves as elements to the Hmong college student's success (Uy, 2015). The next section will explore various elements of the Hmong culture that are in some way connected to the Hmong student's college experience.

### ***Hmong Cultural Values and Practices***

Before diving deeper into the main parts of this research topic, it is important to know the context of cultural values and practices among the Hmong people. Most Hmong families are very closely knit, which can be seen through their cultural values and traditions over the centuries (Ngo, 2017). Major cultural practices have only included a few events, such as funerals, animal sacrifice, weddings, and agricultural traditions

(DeSantiago, 2020). Through these practices, Hmong people can share their spiritual healing and sharing values. This is done by inviting family and friends to celebrate major milestones or support the health of sick and loved ones. Values and milestones which can include education and transitioning into adulthood associated with going to college (Vang 2014).

Hmong students' values growing up with their families can impact their perceptions and experiences (Juang et al., 2015). These can be values and practices taught by their parents, impacting their values and educational experiences. In the Hmong community, children need to listen to their parents, especially their father (Ngo, 2017). In many Hmong families, the father mainly falls into the dominant role as the head of the household. In many cases, such as in the example Ngo (2017) provided, parents expect their children to continue to the Hmong cultural values and traditions, yet also expect them to attain higher education (pp. 462). Being taught to value Hmong cultural values and practices by maintaining a mindset focused on past experiences while being expected to learn and take in a new culture can be a burden (Areba, 2021). In some cases, some Hmong students may not want to "fail" their parents by not meeting their expectations. These expectations can influence Hmong students' effort in their educational goals or cultural traditions and practices (Ngo, 2017).

In the Hmong community, preserving culture is important. Culture and traditions change over time; however, culture was something the Hmong community fought hard to keep (DeSantiago, 2020). Culture and traditions can influence how individuals in the Hmong community engage with one another, influencing the different relationships one

might have (Kwan, 2015). This plays a part in the exosystem based on the ecological systems theory. The Hmong people were used to a slower-paced lifestyle in the mountains, where farming was the main daily activity (Lee, 2006). Religion, language, agriculture, traditional rituals and practices, and traditions are some of the most apparent aspects of Hmong culture (Lee, 2006, 2007). These can also influence how the Hmong community views their social support groups. For example, immediate and extended family members play intimate roles in many religious and spiritual events. Often a Hmong person's support groups consist of just family members (Dentice, 2020). Without a sense of family, many individuals might not feel supported in carrying on traditional practices and beliefs (Dentice, 2020). Having a sense of connection with family, support groups, and traditional practices is something many Hmong individuals cherish as a part of their identity (Vang, 1999).

### ***Religion and Spirituality***

There are two main religious groups for the Hmong community in the United States; Animism and Christianity, with Animism being the traditional religious practice (Her-Xiong et al., 2018). While practicing Animism, Hmong people believe that shamans can help heal individuals and bridge the physical and spiritual worlds (Plotnikoff et al., 2002). Although most traditional Hmong practice Animism and believe in Shamanism, many have converted to Christianity for different reasons (World Watch Monitor, 2017). Christianity as a more prevalent religion for Hmong people in the United States, provides a common connection to practices and beliefs, leading to an easier time with assimilation (Watt, 2008). The religious and spiritual practices of the Hmong individual and their

immediate circle could potentially contribute to or take away resources and time commitment that could impact a Hmong student's experience in college (Her-Xiong, 2018).

### *Language*

The English language has always been a challenge for the Hmong community ever since their arrival in the United States. Hmong refugees had to learn a foreign language when arriving; compared to Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese, there was hardly anyone who spoke English in Asia at the time (Xiong, 2019). Hmong students are expected to navigate the nuances of speaking Hmong at home, English at school, and a space where these two languages intersect (Ngo, 2017). Often, when parents struggled to understand English, they would have their children translate for them (Xiong, 2019). This can add more pressure and tasks for Hmong college students at home or when in public spaces with their parents. One challenge about the Hmong language is that words are limited, and there are sometimes no literal translations for English words and concepts (Lor, 2022). Language barriers between parents and children in the Hmong community affect the parent-child relationship (Omori et al., 2019). Assimilation and language brokering could affect the student's educational success.

On a macro level, language can be considered a possible limitation for Hmong students balancing the Hmong and English languages. Living and being raised in a more westernized culture blended with traditional culture makes it more difficult to completely comprehend both languages (Tatman, 2004). However, English has become the main language for Hmong children, the inability to translate concepts from one language to

another limit's aspects of their educational experience (Ngo, 2017). This comprehension of the Hmong and English languages may influence the educational experiences of Hmong students because of its direct ties to educational success. Teaching children how to speak the Hmong language and understanding the traditions and values of the Hmong people while adjusting and living in the United States can be confusing to Hmong college students (Franzen-Castle, 2013).

### ***Agriculture***

Agriculture connects Hmong refugees to their former lives in Southeast Asia. The Hmong community's agricultural lifestyle was the norm before arriving in the United States (Carroll et al., 2020). Farming was the primary occupation of the Hmong people and was good at. A change in geography comes with how individuals could farm; there were different rules, restrictions, and limitations compared to their traditional way of farming (DeSantiago, 2020). Traditionally, Hmong children helped their parents raise livestock and harvest produce for personal consumption and sale. This traditional way of living reinforces the Hmong people's perspective on manual labor as an acceptable means to earning a living (Vang, 2012). This could create barriers, and a lack of motivation and support towards attaining higher education.

Although many Hmong families and communities in the United States maintained their agricultural traditions, a shift in day-to-day lifestyle changed how Hmong families perceived social responsibilities (Lee, 2006). A tradition centered around hard work, and manual labor may add additional responsibilities on top of the existing responsibilities that a Hmong student might already have. Agricultural duties in the Hmong community

can influence and limit the experiences of Hmong students on a macro level. The effects of traditional agriculture are woven into the Hmong communities, often passed down from one generation to the next. A combination of low-skilled manual labor with a lack of English-speaking proficiency meant jobs in low-paying factory and assembly line positions (Vang, 2012). Further exploration of Hmong agricultural practices and lifestyles would provide additional information about the cultural influences on the experiences of Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24.

### ***Traditional Practices***

Major life events happen for the Hmong community in the United States. These events include the new year, funerals, weddings, and healing ceremonies. During many of these events, Hmong families and community members gather to support each other through each process (Lor, 2008). One event that frequently happens in the Hmong community is healing ceremonies for loved ones. The tradition of practicing spiritual healing occurred in the Hmong community and culture a “millennia ago” when Hmong people were still located in Siberia and Central Asia (Capps, 2011, p. 98). Cultural expectations are that community members participate. Major traditional practices and events such as these can take away time and commitment from other aspects of the Hmong individuals' life such as away from their academics. However social bonding could create areas of support that would help a Hmong student's persistence in college.

### ***Family Orientation***

The Hmong community is very family oriented. Valuing family and community is important for Hmong people because it was a support system they could depend on in the

United States in the beginning (Lee, 1996; Nishio & Bilmes, 1987). Social support for the Hmong community comes in treating others like family even if they are not related. At the time, Hmong families could only depend on other Hmong families for social support (Tatman, 2004). This is an example of a way of life and tradition of the first Hmong people who arrived in the United States. As time has passed, social support groups look differently now for the second, third, and fourth-generation Hmong individuals in the U.S. Hmong students' college experience may be influenced differently depending on what kind of family support system they have (Pearlman, 2020).

Hmong students are studying full time, studying the culture of the United States at school, and studying the Hmong culture at home. Balancing separate cultures may be challenging for Hmong students due to the shift of personas or environments between school and home (Miyares, 1997). Many Hmong elders want Hmong students to not forget who they are and where they came from, and for this reason, they emphasize keeping values, culture, and tradition as of great importance to the Hmong people (Kwan, 2015). However, pressures to assimilate to western culture for academic success are also stressed. An intersection of cultures and pressures to maintain values, culture, and traditions should be explored in Hmong students to see how it affects educational experiences.

### **Hmong Family Expectations**

Family expectations can look different between cultures, groups, and families in the community. Groups and communities are a part of the macrosystem that could influence Hmong college students and their academic experience (Uy, 2015). The norms

and expectations Hmong students grow up in may influence their values in different ways, influencing their educational experiences (Jones, 2016). This section will explore information relating to culture, society, and gender expectations through literature. Family dynamics and how the support systems may look will also be explored throughout this section as part of the Hmong Family's expectations.

### ***Cultural and Societal Expectations***

Expectations in every culture and group can be different. Expectations within families may also vary, but culture can influence how parents set these standards and expectations for their children. Bronfenbrenner (1977) shared that those social processes can also come from a physical environment. Depending on where Hmong families live and grow up, society might influence how they raise their children. The geographic location of Hmong families can have vastly different influences on how they raise their children because of differences in their community and society (Hidayat et al., 2020). For example, a Hmong family living in a rural area would have different environmental and social influences than living in an urban community. The location Hmong students grow up in is a part of their macrosystem, which may influence their resources (Hang, 2021).

Culture can influence individuals through traditions and family practices from one generation to another (Ngo, 2013). It is not a surprise if a Hmong family expects that same thing from their children from another Hmong family in the community. The Hmong culture can greatly influence the standards set for their children (Lee et al., 2008). There is a shared belief that all want their children to succeed academically and professionally (Mun et al., 2019), which is commonly seen in the Hmong community.

Education is highly valued in the Hmong community, and most Hmong families dream of their children getting their degrees and becoming successful as Hmong Americans (Lee, 2008). The experiences of Hmong students at home are different compared with many staff and faculty at school because cultures are different. It is important to explore how social and cultural expectations of Hmong students in the United States affect educational experiences.

### ***Gender Expectations***

In the Hmong culture, expectations can be different for each gender. Hmong men had traditionally different experiences compared to Hmong women (DuongTran et al., 1996). Historically, the Hmong community has been a patriarchal society, where men were seen as superior and leaders of the people (Lor, 2013). In many situations, men made the final decisions in many relationships; a father had the final say in everything in families. While men could go out and do what they wanted, women stayed home and did household chores and childrearing (DuongTran et al., 1996). During important family events such as weddings and funerals, Hmong men are expected to know about the cultural practices, rituals, and traditions (Lee et al., 2009). Hmong women are expected to know what to do in the kitchen during these events and ensure all guests are being taken care of. Although gender roles are more equal in Western society, today, these patriarchal experiences still dominate (Vang, 2016).

Gender roles and expectations are placed on children in the Hmong household at a very young age. Males and females are pressured to follow their roles and become the best Hmong man and Hmong women they can be in their families and the Hmong

community (Lee, 2009). The pressure to adhere to gender roles made it difficult for Hmong children, especially Hmong, because of the balance between American and Hmong culture (Thao, 2003). Hmong women are seen as submissive; however, with the wide variety of opportunities in the United States, things have changed (Thor, 2020). Although roles and responsibilities have changed for Hmong women in their American community, family expectations at home have not. Today, men and women still feel pressured to adhere to their roles in passing on traditions and being good spouses (Lor, 2018). Family obligations can be a factor holding students back from success in school. The expectations for students or children to come back home and assist around the house can pull students away from study time or completing necessary tasks to succeed in college. DuongTran's (1996) study on adolescent youth showed that excessive household chores ranked high in life stressors among expectations and pressures to do well academically for Hmong students. It is important to explore how gender roles and expectations of the Hmong culture in the United States affect college experiences.

### ***Family Dynamic and Support***

Support between parents and children can look different from one family to another. In the Hmong culture, family is valued as the main priority (Tatman, 2004). Children are expected to work hard in school and come back to support their families to pay bills and do chores. Family support in student education improves the success of students attending school (Lor, 2008). Many Hmong parents are immigrants or refugees who lack education and the English language, making it hard for them to support Hmong students throughout school (Ngo, 2017). Most Hmong family households expect the

students to get all their educational support from the school, including teachers and study groups. Differences in language and culture often prevent parental involvement in the educational decisions and strategies for student success (Olivos, 2006). Education is valued in the Hmong community; however, navigating the educational system can be challenging.

Parenting styles can vary from one to another. Studies show how different styles of parenting change the family dynamic between parents and children; the comparison was focused between “authoritative parents” and “permissive parents” (Lamborn et al., 2008). A family and their cultural environment play an impact on each parenting style. The ecological systems theory evaluates the upbringing of individuals and how they are raised in their communities and families (Ecological systems theory, 2020). The study Lamborn and Moua (2008) worked on asked Hmong students between the ages of 11 to 18 to describe if their parents were authoritative or permissive figures in their life, and 40% of the study showed that Hmong parents were more authoritative. Hmong students expressed the expectations from their parents were set high overall. The need to feel "accepted" by their parents by meeting their academic goals, understanding their Hmong culture, and traditions is important (Lamborn et al., 2008).

The different parenting styles Hmong students receive can influence their experiences individually. The pressure Hmong students face and the challenges they encounter throughout their lifetime influence how they perform in school and other settings in their life (Lor, 2008). Parenting styles and parental involvement would play a big role in the success of the Hmong students in college.

## **Hmong People in Higher Education**

This study aims to gain more knowledge regarding how Hmong culture influences the educational experiences of self-identified Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24—gathering more information on previous and current events concerning where Hmong students stand in higher education. This section shares general information about how the Hmong people view education. Although the literature suggests that Hmong people encourage educational attainment, graduation rates for Hmong students are not as adequate compared to their peers (Chiang et al., 2015). This portion of the literature review is a part of the mesosystem as it focuses on research done on individuals compared to peers and or other groups such as colleges and universities.

### ***General Views on Education***

A difference in cultural expectations and parental involvement creates challenges to academic achievement for students (Lee et al., 2010). Research indicating collectivism in the Hmong culture shows that perceptions of a learning environment differ between Hmong students and Western students (Ngo et al., 2018). However, a history of escaping war and migration has caused dramatic damage to the educational networks that individuals traditionally learned (Uy, 2015). With many Hmong American students attending college as first-generation college students with little experience or knowledge of higher education, researchers must look at the perspectives of education, gender, and traditional expectations of Hmong people to have a better understanding of how these things affect educational experience (Ducklow et al., 2019).

### ***Culture and Tradition Influences on Education***

Traditional roles within the culture can affect student experiences in their education. For example, the roles of men and women in the culture, where men are expected to maintain familial traditions while women are expected to get married and leave the family (Jones et al., 2016). More parental investment is placed on men in households because of the expectation for men to stay and maintain family values and traditions. Women receive less parental investment because they are expected to confide in the traditions of their spouse once they are married and move out. Academic success can come because of more parental involvement in their children's education (Lor, 2021). Because men are more invested in, more opportunities exist for them to pursue education and interests. However, because there does not exist pressure for a Hmong woman to learn and maintain cultural traditions, this also allows her more opportunity to seek other venues to provide for the family, such as seeking higher education (Moua, 2018). Perspectives of education, gender, and traditional expectations can impact academic success, especially on first-generation college students (Dukhan et al., 2012).

### ***Enrollment, Retention, Graduation Rates***

College enrollment rates were consistently higher for Asian students every year compared to White, Black, and Hispanic students from 2000 to 2018 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). However, Hmong students fall into the category of the Model minority myth because they are grouped in with high enrollment and achievement rates of Asian students (Chiang et al., 2015). Gaps in higher education achievement are present in the Hmong population; however, it is often overlooked. When looking at the

national average of students who graduate with their bachelor's degree, the number is sitting at about 27.9%, compared to only 14.4% of Hmong Americans graduating with their bachelor's degree (Ogunwole et al., 2012).

Limited resources could affect how students perform in school. A study examining students' financial aid assistance needs showed that over 92% of the Hmong students surveyed qualified for need-based aid compared to 64% of white students (Carmen, 2015). With many Hmong families being first-generation immigrants in the United States, their often-low socioeconomic status might lead to educational achievement downfall (Pagulayan et al., 2021). Hmong college students are falling behind (Carmen, 2015). Many Hmong students who apply and start college do not always complete their program and graduate. Research shows that although Hmong students face hardships in higher education because of cultural and language differences, it is the encouragement of parents and support of family that help to improve retention among Hmong college students (Lor, 2008). This research shows other factors outside of financial resources that could contribute to student success in higher education.

The educational experiences of the Hmong community in the United States have been challenging, with adjustments, many did not see coming. Although Hmong people are not meeting the average graduation rates, students are still working to invest in their community and pursue the American Dream. Hmong students strive to attain an education that their parents never had the opportunity to.

### **Limitation of Current Research**

Although there are studies on this population and how different systems may influence Hmong students' experiences in their lives, there is more to explore about culture and higher education. Questions arise about how culture, beliefs, and traditions influence Hmong students' higher educational experiences.

Literature surrounding cultural practices, beliefs, gender roles, and expectations utilized in this literature review were from sources that were significantly older and possibly outdated. These resources help paint a picture of the Hmong culture and research focus of the Hmong community. Although the literature helps explain the effects of cultural influences on educational experiences, it assumes that Hmong college students are closely connected with family and parents. Research needs to be updated to explore current cultural experiences and how those have or have not changed since most of the literature on this population was conducted.

Studies on this population show that although education is supported and highly valued, the population still struggles with educational success. More research must be done to understand how the culture and practices of Hmong students affect the educational experience. It is important to further explore these experiences as it could help to provide stakeholders with information to help understand the role that culture plays in an environment, especially in school settings. Further exploration into cultural influences and educational experiences is crucial for the success of future Hmong students.

## **Conclusion**

Culture has a big influence on the Hmong community in the United States because of its unique rooted history. Culture and traditions play a big role in the Hmong community, especially for the older generation. The pressures of maintaining family traditions and cultural expectations, combined with encouragement to assimilate, can have mixed results and add to an already full plate. Learning more about the Hmong culture and traditions and how they may influence Hmong students' college experience can help to provide better support systems in navigating higher education. Balancing home and school life between two cultures and generations can be challenging. Because culture can be broad and mean different things to different people, we must try to understand what culture means to Hmong students, how it may influence their educational experiences, and how they balance culture and education. This research will help identify how culture and traditions influence the higher education experience for Hmong students.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

This section of the study presented the research methods used to study how Hmong culture influenced the educational experiences of self-identified Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 through a qualitative research design. This section identified the research design, data sources, data collection methods, instruments used, and data analysis plan. Additionally, ethical standards, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures were explored for the purpose of this study.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question was “How did Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 describe how culture influenced their academic experience?” The research paradigm for this study took an interpretivist approach, where the participants’ unique perspectives influenced the research design and helped researchers understand the experiences Hmong college students went through (Robbins et al., 2012). An interpretivist approach was used for the study to allow for more detailed and subjective responses and to account for differences in how each participant processed and expressed their experiences. This was done to help understand the beliefs, motivations, and reasoning behind the individual interpretations of the participants' experiences with culture. The central concept of the study was the relationship between Hmong culture and academic experience.

A qualitative approach was used to learn more about how Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 educational experiences were influenced by Hmong culture. Qualitative research provided an opportunity for researchers to detail the perspectives of

others through their personal experiences (Denzin et al., 2013). Through this approach, researchers were able to utilize the data to understand parts of a community and its culture (Erickson, 2011). Corbin and Strauss (2008) state the importance of how this kind of approach allows participants to detail how they feel about their experiences, how their surroundings can impact them, and who they chose to engage with.

The research study gathered non-numerical data about how participants experienced their culture. This approach allowed for in-depth insights into how culture was processed by each individual and how their culture interacted with their academic experiences.

Through basic qualitative inquiry, the study aimed to interview participants and observe their engagements. This allowed the researcher to better understand how cultural influences affected Hmong college students' academic experience by building, collecting, and observing how participants used their experience about their culture to make sense of their academic experiences (Liamputtong, 2019). The research shows that cultural influences could have different impacts on individuals, even those who shared similar demographics (Patton, 2015). Basic qualitative inquiry allows for a better understanding of the unique experiences of each individual. Bowers et al. (2001) shared that basic qualitative inquiry helps to organize the research with detailed information that is simple and easily understandable. The detailed, unstructured responses from participants in this study helped the researcher understand how participants described how culture influenced the academic experiences of Hmong college students. Basic qualitative research study was the best fit for the research topic because it aimed to understand how people made

sense of their lives and experiences and allowed the participants to share first-hand experiences with Hmong culture and educational experiences.

### **Role of Researcher**

In this study, my role as the researcher was that of an observer and data collection and analysis instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). As an observer, my interactions with participants involved detailed follow-up questions utilizing my knowledge of the Hmong culture to help participants elaborate on their experiences (Bernard, 2011). I myself served as a human instrument in which data and information were written and processed. My role also included creating an interview guide, recruiting participants, conducting interviews, and interpreting the co-created data with participants. The interpretivist paradigm there is a belief that the individuals' reality is constructed by their personal experiences. Each participant's interpretation of culture was seen as unique and different from others (Robbins et al., 2012). My role as a co-creator of the data was to guide participants in elaborating their individual social realities and their interactions with their higher educational environment. Additionally, my role was to gather information from participants based on what they were willing to share regarding the research questions. I asked questions and follow-up questions to gain a better understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the participants and to seek clarification if needed. I also asked participants to define ideas they assumed to have a shared cultural meaning.

I did not have a supervisory role over the participants as a researcher, and the relationship I had with participants was strictly neutral and professional. Additionally, the cultural background between myself and participants might have deterred participants

from providing complete or detailed responses because of fear of being singled out and identified in the community. To address these concerns, I reviewed the study in detail with participants during the recruitment process to ensure they had a clear understanding of the study's purpose and to encourage genuine participation.

Being a part of the Hmong community and having knowledge of the culture may have helped me understand with cultural context what participants meant or experienced when they shared insights. This also provided me with an opportunity to relate to some of the cultural influences they shared during the interviews, while also allowing participants to elaborate on how they interpreted their experiences. Establishing a partnership with the participant was essential in addressing any power imbalance they might have felt during the interview process.

The participants and I were partners with a high level of commitment to the participant's story and experiences (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). The identity of participants remained confidential, and I shared the rationale for conducting the research to help participants understand the benefits as well as the risks of their participation. Benefits of the research included providing society with more information about how Hmong culture affects higher education experiences of Hmong students, while risks included undesired changes in thought processes or emotions of Hmong students.

Other personal relationships between participants and myself included shared ethnic and cultural backgrounds. To address any bias stemming from these shared backgrounds, I had another colleague who did not identify as Hmong review my data collection. To manage my own biases, I self-reflected on any possible biases before

conducting interviews with participants and wrote down my own assumptions and thoughts before analyzing the data collection. Presenting the preliminary analysis of the study to participants and asking if it matched their experience was done to ensure participants' answers were fully understood.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The population consisted of Hmong individuals between 18 and 24 years old who were currently enrolled in any bachelor's program in the United States. The research study utilized non-probability sampling methods to specifically select participants based on the inclusion criteria (Ungvarsky, 2021). Participants were required to self-identify as Hmong, be between the ages of 18 and 24, and currently enrolled in any bachelor's program at a university or college. The sampling strategy for this study included purposeful and snowball sampling. One strategy involved connecting with colleagues in higher education, such as college staff and faculty, who currently worked in higher education and college students, and having them share more information about the research with anyone who fit the participant requirements. The people they knew might also have had connections to other participants who fit the criteria. Snowball sampling was useful when trying to gather participants quickly (Naderifar et al., 2017).

The study aimed for eight to 10 participants to achieve a saturated sample size. A total of 10 participants participated in the study. The in-depth interviews provided a rich understanding of the experiences of the students, prioritizing their unique perspectives over the larger population. Additionally, the homogeneous population and phenomenon

of Hmong culture and its effect on Hmong college students only required a small sample size before saturation was reached (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Saturation occurred when no more data about a construct revealed new properties or yielded any new insight (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The interpretivist paradigm believed that multiple realities existed in the interpretation of individuals' experiences (Robbins et al., 2012).

There was a total of 10 participants in the sample when saturation was met. Additionally, any individuals with whom the researcher had a previous personal or professional relationship were excluded from participation.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used to gather the data included field notes and an interview guide (Burkholder et al., 2016). The interview was conducted as an in-depth, semi-structured interview, following the interview guide while also allowing flexibility for participants to discuss and explore their experiences. Audio recording was essential for gathering accurate information during the interviews to ensure the quality of the data. The interviews with the participants were completed in around 50-60 minutes. Audio recording devices were used to record the interviews to ensure that audio for questions in the Appendix was recorded without issue.

Another instrument used to gather data was field notes, which helped in gathering detailed information, especially in cases where the data varied greatly from the rest (Ravitch et al., 2016). Field notes could be completed at any point during the interview, providing flexibility in tracking patterns as they arose. Despite the potential for

distraction, field notes were valuable in creating follow-up questions for elaboration and recording detailed participant information.

The interview guide was based on ecological systems theory, including micro, meso, macro, exo, and chrono systems. It consisted of questions related to the research question, exploring how culture influences Hmong college students in their educational experience. The interview guide was tested with friends and colleagues to gather initial information, leading to the development of a final draft for gathering expected participant information, as well as for self-reflection and bias management.

The interview guide facilitated more elaboration and exploration of shared information, allowing for further exploration as long as it related to the research topic. This approach helped in gathering detailed information to control researcher bias and stay focused on the research goal. The interviews were driven based on the engagement of participants, with the interview guide helping to stay on track and focused. Consistency in emerging themes of culture on educational experience aimed to show reliability in the data (Burkholder et al., 2016).

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

As part of the recruitment process, flyers were shared in public spaces around universities in designated community posting areas, at public library bulletin boards that allowed public postings, and on bulletin boards of public community centers.

Additionally, posts were made on public social media websites including, but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Word of mouth was also utilized through social networks of known Hmong individuals to share research information with people who fit

the inclusion criteria (Ungvarsky, 2021). The research announcement was shared via a link in Google Forms for screening and asking for inclusion/exclusion criteria. Information about the study was shared through emails, over the phone, and through public social media channels to reach out to individuals who were interested in participating. Participants could contact the researcher based on the contact information on the flier to find out more or go to the link provided for initial screening. Potential participants were then contacted, and time was scheduled for 60-minute initial interviews through a virtual call, a phone call, or in person depending on their preference. The interviews were recorded, and field notes were taken. The data was transcribed and reviewed with audio to confirm accuracy. Follow-up interviews were scheduled within one month of completing the data transcription to engage in member-checking and ask follow-up questions that emerged from the transcription process. The 30-minute follow-up interviews were recorded and transcribed as well.

The first data collection instrument was an interview guide, which was used to keep the interview on track while collecting information from participants during and after the interview questions (Burkholder et al., 2016). The audio recording was then transcribed. After transcribing the audio recordings, the data was organized for analysis. The third data collection instrument was field notes, used to gather thoughts and other ideas that came to mind during the interview process. Field notes were used to ask follow-up questions and discuss talking points with participants if additional clarifying information required a deeper dive into unexpected conversations. The data were

transcribed, reviewed alongside field notes, and listened to audio recordings before coding, categorizing, and identifying themes.

An audit trail was utilized as a part of the data collection process to establish clear descriptions of the research design, data collection decisions, and rationale for decisions (Lincoln, 1985). The audit trail was a reflexive journal documenting all research activities, personal reflections, and interpretations of emerging themes and rationales.

Check-ins with participants were conducted before the interview began, towards the middle of the interview, and at the end of the interview to ensure their comfort and gauge their feelings throughout the process (Salkind, 2010). The data was collected on a computer through virtual interviews conducted over video calls such as Skype and over the phone, depending on the participant's familiarity and comfort level. The purpose was to ensure participants felt safe and comfortable with the options available for the interview, taking health and safety precautions.

Participants were provided with a debriefing process after the interviews to express how they felt about the interview and address any concerns. They were also asked if they knew of others who met the participant sample requirements and would be interested in participating. Follow-up procedures included scheduling additional follow-up interviews within one month to reflect on the data discussed in the first interview and allow for clarifying questions (Polkinghorne, 2005). Each participant was provided with a contact number to reach out if they felt the need to reconnect about the interview. Additionally, all participants received an email and another thank-you letter to express

appreciation for their time and commitment to the study and remind them of the study's purpose.

### **Data Analysis**

The type of qualitative analysis utilized techniques from grounded theory to guide the understanding of the behaviors in each system Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24 were engaged with, the relationships they had with each system, and how culture may have influenced their academic experience (Wiesche et al., 2017). Rigor, in qualitative terms, was a way to establish trust or confidence in the findings of the research study (Camfield, 2019). It allowed the researcher to establish consistency in the methods used over time and provided an accurate representation of the population studied. Thematic analysis was a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Using thematic analysis to analyze interview transcripts contributed to rigor in the study and allowed detailed descriptions of cultural experiences, feelings, and perceptions to emerge. Then, inductive reasoning was used as the method to approach analyzing the data. Coding was one data analysis tool used for the study to categorize and find common themes from each participant's interview (Ravitch et al., 2016). Codes were developed after the interviews to identify the codes and common themes. Reviewing field notes, transcripts, and listening to the recordings helped in this process.

Coding in the research study made the participant data easier to interpret by simplifying and categorizing responses. The type of coding used was in-vivo coding to aid in data collection since there was a desire to explore more in detail into the culture. It

was crucial to use words participants shared so the data was transparent (Manning, 2017). To know what to code, transcripts were read by units and summarized into words or short phrases. This process helped determine specific codes from what participants shared during the interviews.

Codes were then put into themes to help categorize and highlight important information (Driesen, 2019). Although themes could also reflect researcher bias, they were a part of the coding and categorization process (Rubin et al., 2012). Coding was used in the research study to identify main concepts and themes. Themes helped understand the structure in the analysis and made sense of the data (Suter, 2012).

The analysis program used for this process was NVivo software. NVivo software made the transcription process easier (Rudestam et al., 2015). Organization was important, and keeping track of all the data ensured they were secure and placed was crucial to the data analysis process. Common words or phrases participants shared during the interview were manually coded (Rubin et al., 2012). Inductive coding was important in the research because it approached the study without preconceived notions of what the codes would be, allowing exploration of what participants had to say. Inductive coding developed codes based on the data collected, which was from new information (Fereday et al., 2006). This allowed a narrative to emerge from the data itself.

Transitioning into categorizing, it was important to have exclusive themes as to not overlap. To avoid overlap, new words and phrases were looked for to categorize the codes found in the data collection. Similar codes were categorized if they were similar, and another colleague looked at the codes. Through this process, memo-ing helped

organize thoughts and draft data collection since starting from scratch. Memo-ing allowed for the retention of ideas and established a record of all thought processes throughout the study (Birks et al., 2008).

After identifying the codes, common words and phrases were separated into specific themes based on similarity. Themes were developed through coding, which was based on understanding of the data collection (Ravitch et al., 2016). Compared to coding, themes were more general while codes were more specific to the participant. After identifying the codes, common themes were looked for. This process helped understand the data collection as a whole. Themes were what occurred in the data collection more than once and helped identify commonality from one participant to another along with what was developed while coding and categorizing (Ravitch et al., 2016).

Discrepant data or findings presented themselves as data that contradicted or was unexpected from the data gathered (DiLoreto & Gaines, 2016). In cases where discrepant data was present, the data was included in the results section of the study. When the views of a participant greatly differed from the views of other participants, this provided the study with additional analysis to broaden and develop the data analysis. Discrepant data was focused on and highlighted to enhance credibility in the research findings and conclusion. To assist in managing biases, it was important to remember that the study recorded the experiences of the participants. Establishing the participant's experiences as the main objective of the research study was key to making sure biases were kept in check.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

To uphold the rights of research participants and align with the goals of the study, ethical principles must guide researchers in their conduct and evaluation (Orb et al., 2001). Ensuring confidentiality and maintaining the privacy of participants' responses is crucial for establishing trustworthiness. Well-established research instruments help minimize flaws in the study design.

To initiate this study, I personally reached out to my colleagues and connections within the Hmong community to leverage both professional networks and personal relationships to recruit participants who could provide valuable insights. Each participant was carefully screened to ensure their relevance to the study, and I made it a priority to explain the purpose of the research and reiterate the importance of informed consent.

Following this, I scheduled and conducted interviews primarily through phone or virtual platforms to create a conversational space that reflected cultural sensitivity and trust. As the study progressed, I transcribed and coded the data, identifying themes that resonated with the participants' experiences. Additionally, I arranged follow-up interviews to delve deeper into emerging topics, ensuring that the voices of the participants were authentically represented. These procedures ensured transparency and accountability throughout the research process.

### **Credibility**

Credibility in research was important because of the multiple perspectives and possible realities that existed within the data and results. Because qualitative studies included findings based on the analysis of a researcher, transparency issues could arise

during the formulation of results. Member checking helped to address my personal bias by allowing the participants to view and provide their own narratives for the study (Darawsheh, 2014). Respondent validation in my study occurred in the follow-up meeting with the participant after coding initial interview data. Information indicating themes about culture and effects on educational experience was shared and validated with the participant. This provided more focus to the data collection process in the form of clarification and relevance of the participants' answers to our research question (Lincoln et al., 1985). Purposive sampling of participants utilized the in-depth information they provided to give a better understanding of their experiences of culture on academic experience.

### **Transferability**

Establishing clear and concise procedures was essential in addressing issues of external validity. In addressing transferability, I utilized thick descriptions in describing procedures, context, and participants to provide detailed information of findings to find patterns in the study. Thick description was a research technique in which detailed descriptions and interpretations were provided by the researcher (SAGE, 2018). Participants self-reporting on the criteria of being Hmong could result in differences in culture, including biracial identity, religion, and upbringing, which could result in different outcomes if replicated by other researchers. As stated by Shenton (2004), when qualitative research studies were clearly planned and executed, it ensured the effectiveness of the research design. However, differences in results could also be a cause for additional research being needed to explore the complexity of the findings. For my

study, gathering as much information as possible, being detailed in taking field notes, and keeping a journal to track my thought process in the analysis portion established clear and concise procedures. (Naderifar et al., 2017).

### **Dependability**

To address dependability, I utilize audit trails which included unedited audio recordings and process notes (Lincoln et al., 1985). Some participants shared similar background demographic and professional social circles with me. The shared background and professional social circles provide a deeper understanding of the cultural, professional, or personal nuances in the responses. This contextual insight can help ensure accurate interpretation of the data. The direct use of audio and verbatim responses in conjunction with my audit trail helped ensure the reliability of the results by providing the exact description of the participants, as well as my rationale for categorizing the experiences accordingly. Member-checking or respondent validation accounted for my personal bias by allowing the participants to provide their own narratives for the study (Darawsheh, 2014).

### **Confirmability**

To address confirmability, I kept a reflexive journal to record how ongoing input from participants about their experiences influenced me as the researcher. The reflexive journal served as a written record throughout the research process, including details of what I did, thought, and felt while analyzing the data, as well as the rationale behind my thoughts and perceptions (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Reflexive journaling helped to address personal assumptions and goals by clarifying my thoughts and beliefs. This method of

self-reflection helped me to fully process just the experiences of the participant and helped reduce researcher bias. I provided an audit trail that included the reflexive journal, detailing step-by-step analysis that provided rationale for decisions made in data analysis of participant responses.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical procedures were essential in conducting and evaluating the research (Orb & Wynaden, 2001). The study sought volunteers who were over the age of 18 and had reviewed, agreed, and submitted a consent form. Participants were invited to take part in the research study about how culture influenced the educational experiences of Hmong college students. No participants were involved in the study prior to the IRB review. There were no major risks anticipated for participants in this study. All participants were informed that they could end the interview session at any time. No academic records were used or requested from participants.

Confidentiality was maintained for the subjects by changing all names to non-identifying names. Although thick description could enhance transferability, too much detailed information ran the risk of identifying the participant. When participants provided detailed personal experiences in research, it might not have been possible for them to completely remain anonymous (Bickford & Nisker, 2015). Making the participants aware of this was something I did in my research study. Through informed consent, participants were not forced but were given the option to participate in the study. I was the only one who had access to participant names, emails, and phone numbers. These remained in a password-protected computer and were destroyed 5 years after

completion of the data analysis. The complexity of the role of the researcher and how personally involved a researcher is in data collection and analysis could have affected the way in which the data was processed and presented. Providing brief acknowledgment of my personal cultural background and that it had an influence on my higher education experience with participants could have been a way to address bias. By leaving my experiences brief and open-ended it allowed for information to flow freely without perception of judgment from participants. Insider research was referred to when researchers conducted research with populations in which they were members of (Kanuha, 2000). I shared my personal knowledge and experience if asked by a participant. By bringing in my personal role into my research, it could have allowed for more comfortability with my participants and allowed more in-depth information to be gathered (Adler & Adler, 1987).

Participants received no monetary compensation for participation in the study. This study offered no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study was to provide more information about how culture influenced the educational experiences of Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24. Once the analysis was complete, I shared information with participants about what influences culture had on the experiences of Hmong college students between ages 18 and 24.

### **Summary**

In qualitative research, the aim was to explain relationships between variables, specifically with individual cases. The focus of this study was exploration through interviews with Hmong college students to see how their culture may have influenced

their educational experiences. Many participants and researchers believed that individuals tried to make sense of situations based on their personal experiences (Creswell, 2013). In this research study, I explored deeper meanings individually with my participants through an interview process that focused on their perceptions of how culture affected their academic experience in higher education.

As the researcher in this study, I developed the methodology, developed procedures to ensure validity, and ensured ethical guidelines were followed. Non-probability sampling methods were utilized in selecting current Hmong American college students aged 18 and 24 as the participants for my study. Field notes and an interview guide were used in a semi-structured interview to help track and guide the research study. Information about my study was shared via Google Forms and inquiries were responded to via social media and email. Data collection was completed via face-to-face or virtual interviews. In-vivo coding was utilized to simplify data by categorizing responses.

Basic qualitative inquiry and qualitative research design provided an opportunity to explore a deeper meaning of culture of self-identified Hmong college students and how their values may have influenced their experiences in higher education. I expected the findings from this basic qualitative research to indicate that there would be common themes that emerged from the participants' interpretations of culture on their educational experiences in college.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to produce knowledge about how the culture of self-identified Hmong college students influences their academic experiences. The research question was, “How do Hmong college students between ages 18–24 describe how culture influences their academic experience?” This chapter presents information about the research setting and participant demographics, followed by an overview of the data collection and analysis procedures. To demonstrate rigor and transparency, evidence of trustworthiness is then outlined through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The analytic process was guided by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, which provided a conceptual lens for interpreting how individual experiences were shaped by multiple layers of environmental influence. However, the coding and theme development were conducted inductively, allowing the participants’ voices to drive the initial analytic process rather than pre-established theoretical categories. During the first phase of coding, words and short phrases that captured meaningful units of data were identified directly from participants’ transcripts. These initial codes were then grouped into broader patterns and refined into themes that reflected recurring ideas across participants. Once the final themes were established, the ecological systems framework was applied deductively to interpret how each theme corresponded to the five systems. This dual approach ensured that the findings remained grounded in participants’ lived experiences while also situating them within a theoretically informed understanding of

how cultural, familial, and social contexts shape Hmong students' educational experiences.

The following section presents the themes that emerged from the data analysis. Each theme represents a distinct yet interconnected aspect of how participants perceived their cultural background as influencing their academic experiences. The themes are supported by selected participant quotations that illustrate key patterns identified across interviews. These quotations are integrated with concise interpretations that highlight how the findings align with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and address the central research question. This structure ensures that the participants' voices remain central while also demonstrating how their experiences are situated within broader cultural and environmental contexts.

### **Setting**

Data were collected during November 2022 to May 2023 from participants currently attending a college or university in the United States. There are differences in the location and areas of the colleges the students attend. One participant currently attended college in Missouri, while nine participants attended colleges in Minnesota. Three participants attended larger public colleges while seven participants attended smaller private colleges.

### **Demographics**

All participants self-identified as Hmong and were between the age of 18 and 24 and full-time undergraduate student status. From the total of ten participants in the study, six participants identified as female, and four participants identified as male. Most of the

participants were from Minnesota ( $n = 9$ ), and one of the participants was from Missouri. Many of the participants were in their early twenties, with the average age being 21 years old. There was a surprising mix of different generation immigrant status among the participants. Six participants identified as first generation college students. One participant identified as first generation immigrant, six participants identified as second generation immigrants, one participant identified as third generation immigrant, and two participants identified as fourth generation immigrants. Table 1 presents the demographic and characteristics relevant to the study, highlighting participants' gender, age, state of residence, student status, generation college student status, and immigrant generation.

**Table 1***Participant Demographic Information*

Participant	Gender	Age	State	1st generation college student	Generation immigrant
1	Female	22	Minnesota	Yes	Second generation
2	Female	21	Minnesota	Yes	Second generation
3	Male	21	Minnesota	No	Second generation
4	Female	21	Missouri	Yes	Second generation
5	Male	20	Minnesota	Yes	Second generation
6	Female	24	Minnesota	No	Fourth generation
7	Female	21	Minnesota	No	Third generation
8	Male	23	Minnesota	Yes	First generation
9	Male	24	Minnesota	Yes	Second generation
10	Female	18	Minnesota	No	Fourth generation

**Data Collection**

Nine out of ten participants requested a Skype interview, and one participant requested to be interviewed over the phone. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes to an hour and 30 minutes, with an average of 31.5 minutes. Audio for each interview

was recorded and saved on a laptop. The phone interview lasted about an hour and was recorded on the laptop. Verbal consent to record audio of the interview was obtained immediately before recording. None of the interviews were completed in person as all participants requested that the interviews be completed through phone or videoconference. Interviews were transcribed with transcription software and reviewed and edited by the researcher afterwards for accuracy. Transcripts ranged from 5 to 16 pages with an average of 10 pages per interview. Refer to the Appendix for interview questions.

Participants had two interviews. After the first initial interview, I discussed with each participant about having a second interview, and they had the option to choose if they wanted their follow-up interviews to be done over the phone or through videoconference. The follow-up interviews were conducted to elaborate or clarify responses from participants that could merit more detailed information pertaining to the research question. The follow-up interviews were scheduled within one month of the participants' first interview. A total of 10 follow-up interviews were conducted, ranging from 10 minutes to 32 minutes with an average of 20.5 minutes each. During the follow up interviews specific questions unique to each participant were asked as a form of members checking. In addition, transcripts were shared with the participants and the participants were asked to review the transcripts to ensure the data from the transcripts was accurate. The follow up interviews were transcribed with transcription software by the researcher and reviewed and edited for accuracy. Follow up interview transcripts ranged from one to two pages, averaged two pages per interview, and had a combined

length of 25 pages used for coding. There were no variations from the plan presented in Chapter 3 and no unusual circumstances were encountered in the data collection.

The process for determining saturation was when I started seeing similar responses and enough detailed information responses to my interview questions. After 8 interviews, I saw that many experiences shared were similar. Male participants had similar experiences to each other. For example, male participants all mentioned having to learn to carry on traditional beliefs. Female participants also shared similar experiences to each other. An example of this includes the expression of unfairness when it comes to gender roles in the traditional household. These experiences helped me determine the common themes that evolved throughout the interviews. The interviews for participants 9 and 10 confirmed no new information was produced and determination that saturation was met.

### **Data Analysis**

An inductive approach was initially employed to generate codes directly from participants' narratives without pre-set theoretical categories. This allowed the data to guide the identification of meaningful units related to family, culture, motivation, and educational experiences. Once the preliminary codes were developed, a deductive phase followed in which these codes were organized according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This framework provided a structured lens for interpreting the multiple layers of influence surrounding students' educational experiences.

For example, codes such as "parental encouragement" and "grandparents as role models" were situated within the microsystem, while "culture shock in college" and

“peer role models” aligned with the mesosystem. Similarly, “educational pressure,” “cannot lose face,” and “community expectations” were categorized within the exosystem; “gendered responsibilities” and “patriarchal norms” within the macrosystem; and “immigration history” and “giving back to the community” within the chronosystem.

Once codes were mapped across ecological systems, they were compared and clustered into patterns that reflected recurring ideas within and across levels. Within the microsystem, for example, categories such as family motivation, sibling influence, and extended family support collectively pointed to the centrality of family relationships. In the mesosystem, patterns of cultural conflict, peer influence, and balancing school and home responsibilities revealed tensions between overlapping environments. Across all systems, these patterns were synthesized into overarching themes that provided interpretive insight into participants’ lived experiences while remaining grounded in their own words.

Table 2 provides an overview of the steps involved, including how participant responses were coded, categorized, and developed into themes using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory as a guiding framework.

**Table 2***Coding Process and Theme Development*

Step	Description	Example
Initial coding	Each transcript was reviewed line by line, and meaningful phrases from participant responses were identified as codes.	<i>“Oldest daughter responsibility,” “Make mom proud,” “Cannot lose face.”</i>
Organizing by ecological systems	Codes were categorized according to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems	<i>“Grandparents as a big influence”:</i> <i>Microsystem; “Educational pressure from school”:</i> <i>Exosystem;</i> <i>“Traditional gender roles”:</i> <i>Macrosystem.</i>
Category formation	Within each ecological system, related codes were grouped into descriptive categories that captured recurring ideas.	Microsystem: Family Motivation; Macrosystem: Cultural Expectations; Exosystem: Educational Pressure.
Pattern identification	Categories across systems were compared to identify larger patterns	Categories such as Family Motivation and Parental Education collectively highlighted the central role of family.
Theme development	Overarching themes were compared <i>within</i> and <i>between</i> systems to see how they interconnect,	Family as the Central Influence, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, Education as a Dual Obligation, Gendered Cultural Norms, Historical and Generational Legacy.

Five themes emerged from this process:

1. Family as the Central Influence (Microsystem) – Immediate and extended family members shaped motivation, identity, and academic persistence.

2. Negotiating Conflicting Expectations (Mesosystem) – Students navigated tensions between home, school, and peer environments, often balancing competing demands.
3. Education as a Dual Obligation (Exosystem) – Education was framed simultaneously as a personal pursuit and a responsibility to honor family and community expectations.
4. Gendered Cultural Norms (Macrosystem) – Cultural beliefs about gender roles influenced students’ educational responsibilities and opportunities.
5. Historical and Generational Legacy (Chronosystem) – Students’ experiences were embedded within long-term cultural narratives of immigration, sacrifice, and intergenerational continuity.

This systematic process ensured that themes were grounded in the participants’ experiences and provided an understanding of how Hmong students navigate the intersection of culture and education. The integration of ecological systems theory further contextualized the findings, offering a multidimensional view of the factors influencing their academic journeys.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Member checking was a technique I utilized to ensure credibility for this study. Reviewing the audio recordings of the interviews, transcripts and checking field notes helped to ensure that the interviews were transcribed accurately. Respondent validation in my study occurred in the follow-up meeting with the participant after coding initial

interview data. Information indicating themes about culture and effects on educational experience was shared and validated with the participant. The follow-up interviews allowed participants to elaborate on the answers provided in the first interview. Respondent validation allowed for more rich and detailed information to be collected. Discrepant data was identified and considered throughout the analysis process. Although most participant responses aligned closely with the five central themes, there were instances in which individual accounts presented alternative perspectives. Rather than excluding these data, they were examined to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences.

For example, within the theme Family as the Central Influence, most participants emphasized strong encouragement from parents and grandparents; however, one participant reported that while their family was supportive in daily life, they were not actively involved in educational decision-making. Similarly, in the theme Gendered Cultural Norms, the majority of responses reflected traditional patriarchal structures, yet one participant described more flexible gender expectations in their household. These discrepant cases did not undermine the validity of the themes but highlighted the diversity of family practices and cultural interpretations within the Hmong community.

### **Transferability**

The sample for this study consisted of ten self-identified Hmong undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24 who were enrolled full-time at four-year colleges or universities in the United States. Nine participants attended colleges in Minnesota and one attended a college in Missouri, reflecting the strong geographic concentration of

Hmong communities in the Upper Midwest. The sample included six female and four male participants, most of whom identified as first generation college students and second generation immigrants, with one first generation, one third generation, and two fourth generation participants.

These demographics provide rich insight into how young, traditional-aged Hmong college students experience higher education within a culturally cohesive region that offers a strong network of Hmong community support. However, this demographic composition also limits potential transferability. The findings may not fully represent the experiences of Hmong students in other regions of the United States, where community structures and cultural density differ, or of older, nontraditional, or graduate-level students, whose responsibilities and life stages may shape cultural influences differently. Similarly, because most participants were second generation immigrants and first generation college students, the results may not extend to later generation Hmong students or those from families with prior college experience, whose cultural adaptation and educational navigation may vary.

Although the small, regionally concentrated sample limits broad generalization, the thick description of participant characteristics, cultural background, and educational context allows readers and researchers to evaluate the degree to which the insights from this study may be relevant to similar populations—such as other first generation or Southeast Asian immigrant students navigating the intersection of culture and higher education.

### **Dependability**

The utilization of audio recordings was essential in ensuring dependability. Audio recordings ensured that participant responses were documented correctly and accurately. Text transcriptions of participant interviews allowed for additional review of participant answers.

### **Confirmability**

Reflexive journaling was also utilized to address confirmability. Thoughts, Interactions, and ideas were written to help describe the thought process that went into analyzing participant data. Audio recordings, interview questions, and transcripts were saved without alterations in this study. Having accurate documentation of the coding and analysis process will allow other researchers to replicate and compare results for future studies.

## **Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore how Hmong student's culture influences their educational experiences. Five themes emerged as results from thematic analysis. These themes are Family as the Central Influence, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, Education as a Dual Obligation, Gendered Cultural Norms, and Historical and Generational Legacy as shown below in table 3.

**Table 3**

*Initial Coding, Final Themes, and Participant Examples*

Initial coding (Examples)	Final theme	Participant examples
Microsystem Codes: Oldest Daughter	Family as the Central Influence	“Being the oldest daughter meant I had to set the

---

<p>Responsibility, Encouragement from Parents, Grandparents as Influence, Sister's Experience, Family Motivation</p>	<p>example for my siblings, and that pressure pushed me to keep going in school.” (Participant 4)</p>
<p>Mesosystem Codes: Mom Traditional vs. Dad Modern, Culture Shock in College, Balancing Chores and Studying, Peer Role Models</p>	<p>Negotiating Conflicting Expectations</p> <p>“My grandparents always reminded me that education was their dream for me, so I work hard for them.” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“At home, I had to help with chores before I could study, but at school professors expected me to always be prepared.” (Participant 10)</p>
<p>Exosystem Codes: Expected to Go to School, Cannot Lose Face, Community Bias on Education, Education as Key to Success</p>	<p>Education as a Dual Obligation</p> <p>“My mom held on to traditional ways, but my dad encouraged me to adapt and find my own path.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“If I didn't go to college, people in the community would see it as my family failing, not just me.” (Participant 3)</p>
<p>Macrosystem Codes: Patriarchal Society, Chores for Women, Gender Norms, Hmong Culture as Identity</p>	<p>Gendered Cultural Norms</p> <p>“Education was always described as the only way to make something of myself and give back.” (Participant 5)</p> <p>“My brothers didn't have as many chores as me, but I was still expected to do well in school.” (Participant 6)</p> <p>“As a man, I had to attend cultural events on weekends, which sometimes conflicted with studying.” (Participant 3)</p>

---

---

Chronosystem Codes: Hmong History as Motivation, Immigration as Perseverance, Giving Back to Community, Cultural Pride	Historical and Generational Legacy	“My parents came here with nothing, so I feel like it’s my responsibility to finish school for them.” (Participant 1)  “I carry the weight of our history; education is part of making sure the Hmong people survive.” (Participant 10)
---	---------------------------------------	---

---

### **Family as the Central Influence (Microsystem)**

This theme focuses on how family members directly shaped participants’ motivation, responsibilities, and persistence in college. It aligns with Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem, which includes the people and relationships that have the closest and most direct impact on an individual’s life. For participants in this study, family—especially parents, siblings, and grandparents—played the most important role in influencing their education. Several participants described how family encouragement kept them motivated to continue their studies. Participant 4 (*female, 21, second generation*) said,

My dad just graduated from school... it actually motivated us kids a lot because he's like, if I'm like 50-something and it took me 50 years to get this bachelor, then you guys can get your bachelor degree too.

Similarly, Participant 7 (*female, 21, third generation*) shared, “My grandparents always reminded me that education was their dream for me. My mom always says they never got the chance, so we have to take ours seriously.”

Family influence was often expressed through both emotional support and practical help. Participant 9 (*Male, 24, second generation*) explained, “Whenever I

needed help with financial aid or studying, my siblings were there for me.” Participant 2 (*female, 21, second generation*) added, “Even though my parents didn’t go to college, they always pushed me to go further because they didn’t have that opportunity themselves.” Some participants described family expectations as a shared responsibility rather than an individual goal. Participant 5 (*male, 20, second generation*) said, “Education was always described as the only way to make something of myself and give back. It wasn’t just for me—it was for the family, for my parents who worked hard so I could have this chance.”

Although family was central to all participants’ motivation, experiences differed by gender. Female students often balanced family encouragement with household and caregiving responsibilities, while male students described pressure to uphold cultural or spiritual traditions. These distinctions show that even within the microsystem, the influence of family was shaped by gendered expectations that either constrained or reinforced students’ academic persistence.

Together, these experiences show how family was central in supporting and guiding participants’ educational journeys. The microsystem represents the close relationships that directly affect a person’s growth, and for these students, family interactions provided motivation, accountability, and encouragement. Parents modeled hard work, siblings offered help and advice, and grandparents reminded them of the sacrifices that made education possible. Family not only supported participants academically but also strengthened their sense of purpose and cultural pride.

### **Negotiating Conflicting Expectations (Mesosystem)**

The second theme, *Negotiating Conflicting Expectations*, reflects how participants navigated the overlapping demands of family life, school, and cultural expectations. This theme connects to Bronfenbrenner’s mesosystem, which focuses on the interactions between different parts of a person’s immediate environment—such as how family responsibilities intersect with school obligations. Participants often described feeling pulled between two worlds: the cultural duties expected at home and the academic responsibilities required in college.

Participant 7 (*female, 21, third generation*) described a typical day that showed how these expectations conflicted:

Sometimes before I go to class, I have to help make breakfast for my siblings because they ask me to. I had planned to go early to study, but I couldn’t say no. And when I get home after class, I’m expected to help cook dinner, clean up, and help my younger sisters with their homework before I can start mine.

Participant 10 (*female, 18, fourth generation*) had similar experiences trying to manage her roles at home and in school:

I do find a hard time balancing what’s going on at home, what’s going on at school, and what I have to do when I get home for school. Being the Hmong daughter, I just have so many responsibilities... sometimes it does hold me back.

For many female participants, cultural expectations about being a “good daughter” added additional pressure to meet both family and educational obligations.

Participant 7 (*female, 21, third generation*) mentioned that even though she wanted to

study more on campus, her parents often expected her to come home right after class: “After lab, I’d want to stay and study, but my parents would call and tell me to come home because I needed to take care of things there.”

Male participants also experienced competing expectations but described them differently. Participant 4 (*female, 21, second generation*) explained that family gatherings and cultural events often conflicted with school and work schedules: “I had to figure out a way to balance family events that happen every other weekend with work and school. It made me realize how much time and energy those things take.”

These accounts show that the mesosystem acted as a site of tension, where participants constantly balanced responsibilities between their home lives and academic settings. The demands of both environments sometimes worked against each other, leaving participants feeling stretched thin or guilty for prioritizing one role over another. However, these same experiences also fostered time management skills and adaptability, as participants learned to balance household, cultural, and academic responsibilities. Female participants described reorganizing their schedules around family duties. Participant 10 (*female, 18, fourth generation*) shared, “Sometimes before I go to class, I have to help make breakfast for my siblings... and when I get home after class, I’m expected to help cook dinner, clean up, and help my younger sisters with their homework before I can start mine.” Similarly, Participant 7 (*female, 21, third generation*) explained that even when she wanted to study longer, her parents expected her to return home: “After lab, I’d want to stay and study, but my parents would call and tell me to come home because I needed to take care of things there.”

Male participants also demonstrated adaptability as they balanced school and cultural duties. Participant 4 (*male, 21, second generation*) stated, “I had to figure out a way to balance family events that happen every other weekend with work and school.” These accounts illustrate how students developed organization and flexibility to meet both family and academic expectations, turning cultural responsibilities into opportunities to strengthen persistence and self-discipline. By learning to manage competing expectations, participants demonstrated resilience and a strong sense of responsibility—traits deeply rooted in both their cultural values and academic goals.

By learning to manage competing expectations, participants demonstrated resilience and a strong sense of responsibility—traits deeply rooted in both their cultural values and academic goals.

### **Educational Aspirations and Pressures (Exosystem)**

The third theme, *Educational Aspirations and Pressures*, focuses on how social expectations and community influences shaped participants’ views of education. This connects to Bronfenbrenner’s exosystem, which involves the indirect environments that influence individuals, such as family reputation, community values, and cultural expectations. Participants often described education as more than a personal goal—it was also seen as a way to bring honor to their families and represent the Hmong community in a positive light.

Participant 5 (*male, 20, second generation*) described how the Hmong community views educational success as a shared source of pride:

The community in general is very supportive of education, especially higher education. I feel like there's definitely a lot of pressure to not only make a good name for your family, but to represent your family in a good way by succeeding in higher education.

Similarly, Participant 1 (*female, 22, second generation*) shared that her mother emphasized reputation and social image when it came to her behavior and educational performance: "My mom just cared a lot about our reputation, so she would tell me and my sister, 'Be a good daughter so we don't lose face.' She would just tell us that constantly." Participant 3 (*male, 21, second generation*) described how these cultural expectations shaped his motivation to pursue a teaching career that could benefit others:

I want to become a teacher because I know there are going to be students who come from a very cultural background just like me. I want them to understand that despite all these expectations, they can be who they want to be.

This statement illustrates how cultural pressure within the Hmong community can evolve into a positive motivation. Rather than viewing community expectations as restrictive, this participant internalized them as inspiration to guide future generations who might face similar cultural challenges. His response shows how external cultural values from the exosystem, such as collective responsibility and family reputation, became an internal drive for educational and professional purpose. In this way, the participant transformed social pressure into empowerment, redefining educational success as both personal achievement and community contribution.

Other participants described feeling both motivated and burdened by these external pressures. Participant 10 (*female, 18, fourth generation*) said, “Every random community person that I see—they always motivate me. Even though they don’t really know me, they’re always like, ‘Go to school, go to school.’ It’s always ‘go to school.’” This constant reminder reinforced how community values and social reputation were deeply tied to educational success. Participant 6 (*female, 24, fourth generation*) added that peers and coworkers also played a role in reinforcing these values: “When I see my peers trying hard in their academics or balancing school and work, it motivates me to do the same.” These examples show how the exosystem operated through social structures and community expectations that indirectly shaped participants’ experiences. Education was more than an individual pursuit—it was connected to maintaining family honor, contributing to the community, and fulfilling cultural values. While this created added pressure to perform, it also encouraged persistence and a sense of collective purpose. Participants’ experiences within the exosystem highlight how external influences—such as family reputation and community pride—helped shape both their aspirations and their sense of responsibility toward others.

### **Gendered Cultural Norms (Macrosystem)**

The fourth theme, *Gendered Cultural Norms*, describes how traditional Hmong beliefs and values about gender influenced the educational experiences of participants. The fourth theme, Gendered Cultural Norms, describes how traditional Hmong beliefs and values about gender influenced participants’ educational experiences across multiple systems. This theme aligns with Bronfenbrenner’s macrosystem, which encompasses the

overarching cultural ideologies and social norms that define appropriate roles for men and women. Within Hmong culture, patriarchal values shape expectations of leadership, caregiving, and responsibility, establishing clear distinctions between male and female roles.

However, while these gendered beliefs originate in the macrosystem, participants most often experienced their effects within the microsystem, particularly in the family environment. Male and female participants described different types of interactions and responsibilities that reflected how these cultural norms were enacted in daily life. Female participants discussed being expected to take on caregiving and household roles in addition to managing their education, whereas male participants described pressure to uphold family traditions or represent the family in cultural events. These differing experiences demonstrate how macrosystemic beliefs about gender were internalized and practiced within participants' immediate environments, shaping how they balanced family obligations and academic responsibilities.

Participant 1 (*female, 22, second generation*) shared, "Being the oldest and being a Hmong woman, I am expected to look after my siblings. I take care of my siblings, and I cook and clean. That is expected of me." Participant 6 (*female, 24, fourth generation*) described how these expectations reflected traditional Hmong values: "Specifically in the Hmong culture, men are considered the ones who are to lead... Women are the nurturers, the caregivers... the ones who help cook and clean around the house." Participant 7 (*female, 21, third generation*) explained that while she valued her culture, these gender expectations sometimes made schoolwork more difficult: "There were times when I

wanted to study longer, but I had to help at home. My parents didn't see that as a bad thing—they saw it as part of my role as a daughter.”

Male participants also discussed cultural expectations, but their experiences often involved leadership or responsibility for maintaining Hmong traditions. Participant 3 (*male, 21, second generation*) said, “I feel like men are expected to know the culture... Eventually, I'm going to have to learn this and that, and whatever. It's just part of what's expected of me as the only son.” Participant 9 (*male, 24, second generation*) added that while male roles came with more freedom, they also carried cultural weight: “My parents always tell me that one day I'll have to be the one to carry on family traditions. It's not pressure about school, but pressure to be the man of the house later on.”

These examples show how the macrosystem operates through deeply rooted cultural values that shape gender identity and expectations. For female students, cultural roles often meant balancing academic responsibilities with caregiving duties. For male students, expectations were tied to leadership and preserving family customs. While these gendered norms sometimes created obstacles for academic focus, participants also expressed pride in their cultural identity and an awareness of how traditional values continue to influence modern educational experiences. Overall, this theme shows that participants' experiences with education were shaped by larger cultural beliefs about gender roles within the Hmong community. These beliefs, part of the macrosystem, affected not only how students managed their time and responsibilities but also how they understood their place within their families and culture.

### **Historical and Generational Legacy (Chronosystem)**

The fifth theme, *Historical and Generational Legacy*, focuses on how participants connected their educational goals to their families' history and the collective experiences of the Hmong people. This theme aligns with Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem, which includes the impact of historical events, generational shifts, and life transitions over time. Participants described how their family's journey as refugees, immigrants, or descendants of those experiences shaped their motivation to succeed in higher education.

Several participants spoke about education as a way to honor the sacrifices of earlier generations. Participant 1 (*female, 22, second generation*) said, "My parents came here with nothing, so I feel like it's my responsibility to finish school for them." Participant 10 (*female, 18, fourth generation*) described how learning about Hmong history inspired her to work harder:

Knowing about that history, it's like we came from a very sad background. Just knowing that your community was getting killed and that our people went through so much—it just motivates me to go to school and be the best that I can be.

Participant 5 (*male, 20, second generation*) explained that his motivation came from wanting to help his community move forward: "Thinking about the history of Hmong people makes me try harder to not only succeed personally, but to give back and maybe one day help bring up the community." Participant 7 (*female, 21, third generation*) also shared that the stories her parents told about life in Laos and the refugee camps gave her perspective: "When I think about what my parents had to go through—having to start all

over again in a new country—it makes me realize how lucky I am to be able to go to school here.”

For many participants, these memories of family hardship and community resilience created a strong sense of duty to continue that legacy. Education was seen as both an opportunity and a responsibility to honor the past while improving the future for the Hmong community. This theme highlights how the chronosystem influenced participants’ educational experiences through time, memory, and intergenerational continuity. The struggles and perseverance of earlier generations were not distant history; they were part of each participant’s motivation to succeed. Students described feeling driven to make their families proud and to carry forward their ancestors’ hopes for a better life. These findings show how cultural and historical awareness shaped participants’ educational goals and gave deeper meaning to their academic success.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings from interviews with ten Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24, exploring how culture influenced their educational experiences. Five themes emerged from the analysis, each representing a different level of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory: Family as the Central Influence, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, Education as a Dual Obligation, Gendered Cultural Norms, and Historical and Generational Legacy.

In the microsystem, Family as the Central Influence revealed that family members played a vital role in shaping motivation and persistence. Parents and extended relatives encouraged students to pursue education, though gender often affected how these

expectations were expressed. The mesosystem theme, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, showed how students balanced cultural and family duties with school responsibilities. Participants described how these overlapping demands created stress but also taught them time management and resilience. Within the exosystem, Education as a Dual Obligation illustrated that education was viewed not only as an individual goal but also as a family and community responsibility. Success in school represented honor for the family and pride for the Hmong community. The macrosystem theme, Gendered Cultural Norms, highlighted how traditional gender roles influenced participants' academic experiences. Female students often balanced domestic duties with schooling, while male students carried expectations to maintain cultural traditions and leadership roles. Finally, the chronosystem theme, Historical and Generational Legacy, reflected how students connected their education to their families' migration history and sacrifices. Participants viewed college as a way to honor earlier generations and continue a legacy of resilience.

Overall, these findings demonstrated that culture shaped Hmong students' educational experiences at multiple levels. Family, gender, community, and history all played interconnected roles in influencing motivation, responsibility, and persistence in higher education. Chapter 5 further interprets these findings in relation to existing research and theoretical perspectives.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

The previous chapter presented the main findings from this study, which explored how culture influences the educational experiences of Hmong college students. Five themes—Family as the Central Influence, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, Educational Aspirations and Pressures, Gendered Cultural Norms, and Historical and Generational Legacy—showed how participants’ experiences were shaped by relationships, responsibilities, and expectations across multiple layers of their environment. Using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, these findings highlighted how family, community, and broader cultural contexts interact to shape Hmong students’ motivation, challenges, and persistence in higher education.

Building on those findings, this chapter discusses what the results mean in relation to existing literature and theory. It also explains how the findings connect to previous research on Hmong students and other culturally diverse groups, outlines the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for practice and future research. The goal of this chapter is to interpret the results presented in Chapter 4, show how they contribute to the understanding of culture and education, and suggest ways educators and institutions can better support Hmong college students as they navigate both cultural and academic expectations.

The purpose of this research was to explore how the cultural context of Hmong college students shapes their higher education experiences. Through in-depth interviews, this qualitative study captured the voices of Hmong students, focusing on their

perceptions of how cultural influences impacted their academic journeys. The guiding research question was: *How do Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24 describe the influence of culture on their academic experience?*

The findings of this research revealed that culture plays a dual role, acting both as a source of support and as a barrier for Hmong college students. Familial responsibilities, gender expectations, and cultural pressures have been described in past research as challenges that complicated students' ability to fully focus on their education, aligning with previous findings (Quang et al., 1996; Thao, 2003). At the same time, participants emphasized that family encouragement, peer relationships, and shared cultural experiences provided motivation and strength, helping them overcome these challenges. These dual experiences show that Hmong students must constantly balance cultural identity with academic demands while drawing from both to persist and succeed in higher education.

This chapter discusses how these findings relate to the broader literature on culture and education, including how Hmong students' experiences both align with and differ from previous studies. It also explains how Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory helps frame the interconnected influences shaping students' educational journeys. Finally, the chapter presents the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for improving institutional support and understanding of Hmong college students in higher education.

## **Interpretations of the Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24 described the influence of culture on their educational experiences. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the interpretation of findings situates participants' lived experiences within interconnected systems that influence development across individual, relational, and cultural levels. The five major themes—Family as the Central Influence, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, Education as a Dual Obligation, Gendered Cultural Norms, and Historical and Generational Legacy—reflect how culture functions as both a supportive and constraining force in the pursuit of higher education. In this chapter, these themes are interpreted through existing literature and theoretical frameworks to illuminate how Hmong students' academic journeys are shaped by multilevel cultural dynamics.

### **Family as the Central Influence (Microsystem)**

At the microsystem level, family emerged as the most immediate and consistent influence on participants' motivation, sense of responsibility, and persistence. Parents, siblings, and extended relatives provided emotional and instrumental support, shaping how participants approached academic life. However, these influences varied according to gender. Female participants often described support that coexisted with domestic expectations, while male participants received messages emphasizing perseverance and future leadership. Participant 1 shared, "Being the oldest and being a Hmong woman, I am expected to look after my siblings. I take care of my siblings, and I cook and clean. That is expected of me." In contrast, Participant 3 explained, "I feel like men are

expected to know the culture... Eventually, I'm going to have to learn this and that, and whatever. It's just part of what's expected of me as the only son."

These findings align with Xiong (2023), who found that Hmong male students often interpret family messages of *rau siab* (perseverance) as tied to cultural responsibility, while daughters face more immediate involvement in household and caregiving expectations (Xiong et al., 2019). This gendered difference demonstrates how cultural norms operate within the microsystem, influencing daily interactions and the type of academic encouragement students receive. Thus, family functions as both a source of motivation and a mechanism for reinforcing traditional gender roles, shaping the educational pathways of Hmong students in distinct ways.

### **Negotiating Conflicting Expectations (Mesosystem)**

The mesosystem, which captures interactions among students' immediate environments, revealed how Hmong college students navigated the tension between cultural and academic expectations. Female participants described being expected to fulfill domestic and caregiving duties while maintaining high academic performance. Participant 7 explained, "Sometimes before I go to class, I have to help make breakfast for my siblings because they ask me to... And when I get home after class, I'm expected to help cook dinner, clean up, and help my younger sisters with their homework before I can start mine." Participant 10 echoed this challenge: "Being the Hmong daughter, I just have so many responsibilities... sometimes it does hold me back." For others, like Participant 2, learning to manage these overlapping expectations led to increased resilience and planning: "I learned to plan my days better because if I don't, everything

piles up. I have to balance my parents' expectations, work, and my schoolwork.”

Similarly, Participant 4 described, “It requires a lot... time where like I have to debate and find time for certain things and it just really makes me choose and understand what is my priority in life.”

These examples demonstrate that while the intersection of school and family roles created stress, it also promoted adaptability and time management. Kwan (2020) found that Hmong students who balance cultural duties and academic work often develop strong organizational and problem-solving skills, while Vue and Xiong (2021) noted that navigating dual contexts strengthens persistence and identity integration. The participants' experiences reflect this pattern of growth, showing that managing competing demands can cultivate resilience—an essential asset for first-generation and culturally rooted students.

### **Education as a Dual Obligation (Exosystem)**

The exosystem, encompassing indirect social and cultural influences, revealed that participants viewed higher education as both a personal endeavor and a communal duty. Participant 10 described how community members and family reinforced this belief: “Every random community person that I see... they're always like, ‘Go to school. Go to school.’ It's always ‘go to school.’” She added that her parents frequently reminded her not to “lose face” and to strive toward advanced degrees because “I'm representing my Hmong culture, my Hmong people.” Participant 9 similarly shared, “You want to... be successful... cuz... other people are going to hear about it... our interactions with other communities definitely affects me.”

These accounts illustrate how Hmong students internalize educational achievement as a reflection of collective reputation. Her (2022) and Xiong (2023) found that Hmong students often equate educational persistence with family honor and communal representation. This reflects broader Asian American familism values, where success is understood through interdependence and obligation (Choi et al., 2021). Participants' narratives affirm that education operates as both an individual pursuit and a cultural expression of gratitude, linking academic persistence to the preservation of collective dignity and community identity.

### **Gendered Cultural Norms (Macrosystem)**

The macrosystem encompasses the overarching cultural beliefs and societal values that shape gender roles and expectations. For Hmong students, traditional gender norms structured not only household duties but also the types of academic support and freedom available to each gender. Participant 6 explained, "Specifically in the Hmong culture, men are considered the ones who are to lead... women are the nurturers, the caregivers... the ones who help cook and clean around the house." Participant 7 elaborated, "There were times when I wanted to study longer, but I had to help at home. My parents didn't see that as a bad thing—they saw it as part of my role as a daughter." In contrast, Participant 9 reflected, "My parents always tell me that one day I'll have to be the one to carry on family traditions. It's not pressure about school, but pressure to be the man of the house later on."

These findings parallel Moua's (2020) study of Hmong American women, which described the "double bind" of fulfilling both academic and domestic expectations. Xiong

and Vue (2021) similarly found that male Hmong students frame educational motivation through cultural continuity and leadership, while Lee (2022) noted that immigrant daughters often face stricter behavioral expectations than sons. The macrosystem therefore shapes daily experiences at every ecological level, influencing how gender expectations are enacted and internalized within families and educational settings.

### **Historical and Generational Legacy (Chronosystem)**

The chronosystem, reflecting the influence of historical context and generational continuity, illuminated how participants connected their educational pursuits to the experiences of migration, displacement, and resilience within their families. Participant 1 stated, “My parents came here with nothing, so I feel like it’s my responsibility to finish school for them.” Participant 10 shared, “Knowing about that history, it’s like we came from a very sad background... our people went through so much—it just motivates me to go to school and be the best that I can be.” Participant 5 noted, “Thinking about the history of Hmong people makes me try harder to not only succeed personally, but to give back and maybe one day help bring up the community.” These sentiments echo a collective sense of intergenerational responsibility.

Yang (2021) found that second- and third-generation Hmong students often view college as a way to “fulfill the unfinished dreams” of parents and grandparents who lacked educational opportunities. Vang and Lee (2022) and Her and Xiong (2023) likewise identified storytelling and shared memory as sources of motivation, linking ancestral endurance to modern educational success. These findings suggest that for

Hmong students, education serves as a living expression of historical resilience and cultural continuity—transforming past hardship into present opportunity.

Across systems, the findings demonstrate that culture functions simultaneously as a source of strength and as a framework of obligation. Family and community ties promote persistence and purpose but also impose expectations that require students to navigate complex cultural, academic, and gendered boundaries. By interpreting participants' experiences through Bronfenbrenner's model, this study illustrates how Hmong students' educational journeys are not isolated events but reflections of interdependent systems of meaning—each shaped by history, family, and cultural values that continue to evolve across generations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. One limitation was the small sample size of 10 Hmong college students, which affects the transferability of the results. While the goal of qualitative research is not generalization, a larger and more geographically diverse sample could have provided a broader view of Hmong students' experiences across different contexts. As Flick (2018) and Vasileiou et al. (2018) note, small qualitative samples often limit the range of perspectives that can be represented. Because most participants were from Minnesota and only one was from Missouri, the findings may reflect regional experiences rather than the full range of experiences of Hmong college students in the United States.

Another limitation was the use of convenience sampling and self-selection, which may have influenced who chose to participate. As Stone et al. (2024) explain, individuals

who volunteer for studies like this often have stronger personal connections to the topic. In this case, participants who were more engaged with their Hmong identity or who had strong opinions about culture and education may have been more likely to take part, which could have affected the range of viewpoints represented in the data.

Language was another consideration in this study. Although all interviews were conducted in English, some participants required clarification or simpler phrasing for certain questions. This occasionally affected the flow of conversation or how detailed responses were. As Affleck et al. (2013) point out, language differences can create challenges in qualitative research, especially when cultural nuances are involved. In this study, words like “immigration,” “tradition,” or “acculturation” sometimes required further explanation, which may have influenced how participants interpreted and answered those questions.

The method of data collection also presented certain limitations. All interviews were conducted virtually, either by phone or Skype, without video. While this approach made participation more convenient and accessible, it limited the ability to observe body language or nonverbal communication that might have provided additional context. Lefever et al. (2007) noted that virtual interviews can sometimes reduce the richness of qualitative data, even though they increase accessibility.

Differences in academic standing and college experiences among participants added another layer of complexity. Some were in their first year of college, while others were close to graduation. Transfer students also brought unique perspectives that may have differed from students who stayed at one institution. These differences likely

influenced the ways participants described their academic challenges and cultural experiences.

Cultural variation within the sample also affected the findings. Participants held different views about how strongly they identified with Hmong traditions. Some described culture as a major part of their daily lives, while others felt more distanced from it. These differences influenced how they experienced both support and pressure related to education. As Toft and Ducklow (2019) noted, personal upbringing and individual experiences play a major role in shaping how students interpret their cultural identity.

Overall, these limitations highlight the challenge of capturing the full diversity of Hmong students' experiences within a single qualitative study. Despite these challenges, the study provides valuable insight into how culture shapes the educational experiences of Hmong college students. Acknowledging these limitations helps guide future research toward broader, more inclusive approaches that continue to build on the themes identified in this study.

### **Recommendations**

The findings from this study suggest several areas for future research and practice related to supporting Hmong college students. Future studies should continue exploring the gendered experiences of Hmong students, as this study showed clear differences in expectations and responsibilities between male and female participants. Male students described cultural pressure to uphold traditions, while female students often managed both academic work and domestic duties. Understanding these differences can help

researchers and educators design programs that better address gender-specific barriers to success. As Pa (2020) suggested, resources such as flexible class schedules, childcare services, and scholarships targeted toward women may help reduce gender disparities in higher education.

Future research could also focus on specific points within the college experience, such as first-year students adjusting to campus life or seniors preparing for graduation. Because participants in this study represented different stages of their academic journey, narrowing the focus to one group could provide a deeper understanding of how motivation, persistence, and challenges change over time (Dukhan et al., 2012). Focusing on students at similar stages may also help identify the types of institutional and family support that are most effective at different phases of college.

Practical recommendations for educators, families, and institutions include developing programs that strengthen family involvement, peer mentorship, and cultural awareness on college campuses. Previous studies have shown that parental engagement is a key factor in student success (Toft & Ducklow, 2019; Lamborn & Moua, 2008). Colleges can support this by hosting family-oriented workshops or informational sessions that explain college expectations, study habits, and how parents can encourage academic persistence. This type of outreach could help bridge the gap between traditional cultural expectations and academic demands, allowing families to better understand and support their students' experiences.

Many participants in this study described receiving emotional support from their parents but said that their families were not always involved in the academic aspects of

their college life. Programs that help parents learn about higher education processes—such as course registration, study time, and workload—could strengthen communication between students and families. As Lee (2017) noted, when parents understand the realities of college life, they are more likely to support their children’s academic commitments even when they conflict with family or cultural obligations.

Cultural expectations, including household duties and participation in family events, also created time and stress challenges for many students. Universities could help by offering academic flexibility that recognizes these cultural responsibilities. Examples include extended deadlines, hybrid or online courses, and weekend classes. These accommodations could help students balance cultural and academic commitments more effectively (Costigan et al., 2010).

Peer mentorship programs may also serve as a valuable support system. Connecting new Hmong college students with peers or alumni who have successfully navigated similar experiences could provide both practical guidance and emotional encouragement. Kolb (2009) found that mentorship strengthens motivation and persistence by giving students relatable examples of success. Institutions could highlight the achievements of Hmong students through workshops, campus events, or student panels, helping to build a stronger sense of community and cultural pride.

In addition, colleges should continue to expand cultural competency training for faculty and staff. Understanding the unique history and experiences of Hmong students—such as refugee resettlement, intergenerational expectations, and strong family-centered values—can improve communication and create more inclusive learning environments

(Uy, 2015). Integrating Hmong culture and history into campus programs, student organizations, and diversity initiatives can help students feel seen and supported while fostering mutual understanding between students and faculty.

Finally, institutions can promote long-term student success by offering personal and professional development opportunities that align with Hmong students' cultural values of family, giving back, and community service. Creating internships, leadership programs, and career counseling opportunities that emphasize community involvement can help students connect their education to their cultural identity. By recognizing that Hmong students often pursue higher education to support their families and communities, colleges can design programs that affirm these motivations and help students find meaning and purpose in their academic journeys.

### **Implications**

The findings from this study have several important implications for educators, social workers, and higher education institutions that serve Hmong students. The results highlight how family, culture, and gender expectations intersect to shape students' motivation, identity, and persistence in college. Recognizing these intersections is essential for developing programs and policies that effectively support the needs of Hmong and other culturally rooted student populations.

One key implication is the importance of family engagement in promoting academic success. This study found that students who received emotional and motivational support from their families demonstrated greater persistence and morale. Family encouragement, even when not directly tied to academic involvement, created a

sense of accountability and purpose. This supports the findings of Meeuwisse et al. (2010), who emphasized that family support is strongly linked to higher educational achievement. Institutions can use this insight to design outreach programs that include families as partners in student success—such as family orientations, culturally sensitive communication, or events that highlight the value of education within the Hmong community.

Another implication concerns the role of intergenerational relationships in shaping motivation and educational identity. Students in this study often linked their academic goals to the sacrifices made by their parents and grandparents. This aligns with Dentice (2020), who found that intergenerational narratives strongly influence students' sense of purpose. For Hmong students, honoring their family's history of migration and resilience created a deep emotional connection to education. By acknowledging and integrating these cultural narratives, educators can foster a more inclusive environment where students' heritage is seen as an asset rather than a barrier.

The findings also emphasize the need to address cultural and gender-based barriers that may limit students' opportunities or create additional pressures. For instance, Hmong female students often balance household responsibilities alongside academic work, while male students experience pressure to uphold traditional cultural roles. Colleges can help mitigate these pressures by promoting equity-based initiatives that consider how gender and culture shape students' academic experiences. These initiatives might include mentorship programs, culturally informed counseling, and leadership opportunities that empower students to navigate both cultural and academic expectations.

Finally, the study underscores the broader social importance of culturally responsive education. Understanding how culture shapes learning experiences is crucial not only for Hmong students but for other immigrant and first generation populations as well. As Duncan et al. (2012) and Paik et al. (2014) noted, recognizing the role of family and cultural values in education allows institutions to provide more effective and empathetic support systems. By integrating cultural competency into campus policies, advising, and curriculum, colleges can create environments where students from diverse backgrounds feel understood, supported, and capable of achieving success without sacrificing their cultural identity.

Overall, this study highlights the need for educational systems to adopt holistic approaches that value both cultural heritage and academic development. By viewing Hmong students' experiences through the lens of family, culture, and community, educators and policymakers can help build more inclusive and supportive learning environments that lead to meaningful and lasting social change.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored how Hmong culture shapes the higher education experiences of Hmong college students between the ages of 18 and 24. Using a basic qualitative inquiry approach, interviews with 10 participants revealed that culture functions both as a guiding framework and as a source of challenge throughout their academic journeys. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the study examined how multiple layers of influence—from family relationships to historical context—interact to shape students' motivation, identity, and persistence in higher education.

The five themes that emerged—Family as the Central Influence, Negotiating Conflicting Expectations, Education as a Dual Obligation, Gendered Cultural Norms, and Historical and Generational Legacy—illustrate the complexity of navigating higher education within a strong cultural context. Family and community values served as central motivators, with participants describing education as a shared goal that honors the sacrifices of earlier generations. At the same time, cultural expectations and gendered responsibilities often created added pressure, requiring students to balance academic, familial, and cultural demands simultaneously.

Through these findings, the study highlights the strength and resilience of Hmong college students. Participants demonstrated how family support, cultural pride, and collective history serve as sources of perseverance and motivation. Education was not viewed merely as an individual achievement but as a means to uplift one's family and community—linking personal progress to collective well-being. These experiences show that academic success for Hmong students is deeply tied to cultural values of respect, reciprocity, and intergenerational responsibility.

The findings underscore the importance of recognizing cultural context in shaping students' educational experiences. Understanding how Hmong students navigate multiple cultural systems can help educators and policymakers design programs that validate cultural identity while promoting academic growth. Creating learning environments that value family engagement, cultural knowledge, and equitable support systems can help bridge the gap between cultural and institutional expectations, thereby improving

educational access and outcomes for Hmong students and other culturally diverse populations.

Ultimately, this study reinforces that academic success for Hmong students is not defined by individual effort alone—it is rooted in family, heritage, and history. By honoring these connections, higher education institutions can play a meaningful role in empowering Hmong students to achieve success that reflects both personal accomplishment and cultural pride.

## References

- Adler, P., & Adler, P. (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Sage.
- Affleck, W., Glass, K., & Macdonald, M. E. (2013). The limitations of language: Male participants, stoicism, and the qualitative research interview. *American Journal of Men's Health, 7*(2), 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988312464038>
- Alvarez, M. E., Bye, L., Bryant, R., & Mumm, A. M. (2013). School social workers and educational outcomes. *Children & Schools, 35*(4), 235–243. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdt019>
- Areba, E. M., Watts, A. W., Larson, N., Eisenberg, M. E., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2021). Acculturation and ethnic group differences in well-being among Somali, Latino, and Hmong adolescents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 91*(1), 109–119. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000482>. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000482>
- Bernard, H.R. (2011). *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 5th ed., Alta Mira.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026999497378467>
- Bickford, J., & Nisker, J. (2015). Tensions between anonymity and thick description when “studying up” in genetics research. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*(2), 276–282.
- Birks, M., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research: Probing data and processes. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 13*(1), 68–75.

- Bluteau, P., Clouder, L., & Cureton, D. (2017). Developing interprofessional education online: An ecological systems theory analysis. *Journal of Interprofessional Care, 31*(4), 420–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2017.1307170>
- Bowers, B. J., Fibich, B., & Jacobson, N. (2001). Care-as-service, care-as-relating, care-as-comfort: Understanding nursing home residents' definitions of quality. *The Gerontologist, 41*(4), 539–545. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/41.4.539>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist, 32*(7), 513–531. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology, 22*(6), 723–742. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.22.6.723>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). Developmental ecology through space and time: A future perspective. In P. Moen, G. H. Elder, & K. Lüscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (pp. 619–647). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10176-018>

- Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., & Crawford, L. M. (Eds.). (2016). *The scholar-practitioner's guide to research design*. Laureate Publishing.
- Camfield, L. (2019). Rigor and ethics in the world of big-team qualitative data: Experiences from research in international development. *Shoulder & Elbow*, 63(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1758573220970907>
- Capps, L. L. (2011). Ua neeb khu: A Hmong American healing ceremony. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 29(2), 98–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898010110385940>
- Carroll, W., & Schaffer, D. (2020). Employment and wages of Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees in the United States. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 18(4), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2020.1714068>
- Chiang, A., Fisher, J., Collins, W., & Ting, M. (2015). (Mis)labeled: The challenge of academic capital formation for Hmong American high school students in an urban setting. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, 10(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015579728>
- Choi, Y., He, M., Lee, E. Y., & Harachi, T. W. (2021). Upholding familism among Asian American youth: Intergenerational meanings of obligation and success. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 27(4), 597–608. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000432>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>

- Constantine, M. L., Rockwood, T. H., Schillo, B. A., Alesci, N., Foldes, S. S., Phan, T., & Saul, J. E. (2010). Exploring the relationship between acculturation and smoking behavior within four Southeast Asian communities of Minnesota. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 12(7), 715–723. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntq070>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Costigan, C. L., Hua, J. M., & Su, T. F. (2010). Living up to expectations: The strengths and challenges experienced by Chinese Canadian students. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 25(3), 223–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573510368941>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Culhane-Pera, K. A., & Xiong, P. (2003). Hmong culture: Tradition and change. In K. A. Culhane-Pera, D. E. Vawter, P. Xiong, B. Babbit, & M. M. Solberg (Eds.), *Healing by heart: Clinical and ethical case stories of Hmong families and Western providers* (pp. 11–68). Vanderbilt University Press.
- Darawsheh, W. (2014). Reflexivity in research: Promoting rigor, reliability, and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation*, 21(12), 560–568.
- Dentice, D. (2020). Hmong immigrants. Salem Press Encyclopedia.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2013). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In *The landscape of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 1–44). Sage Publications.

- DeSantiago, D. V. (2020). Changes, conflict, and culture: The status of social-cultural, environmental, and legal challenges for Hmong cultural practices in contemporary California. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 22, 1–41.
- DiLoreto, M., & Gaines, T. (2016). An investigation of discrepancies between qualitative and quantitative findings in survey research. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 15(12), 145–154.
- Driesen, C. (2019). Category positioning—A qualitative content analysis approach to explore the subjective importance of a research topic using the example of the transition from school to university. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 20(3), 1–11.
- Ducklow, L., & Toft, J. (2019). Perspectives from Hmong American women about the first-generation college student experience in higher education. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 29(6), 455–472.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2019.1570887>
- Dukhan, S., Cameron, A., & Brenner, E. A. (2012). The influence of differences in social and cultural capital on students' expectations of achievement, on their performance, and on their learning practices in the first year at university. *International Journal of Learning*, 18(7), 337–351.
- Ecological systems theory*. (2020). *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Science*.
- Endo, R. (2017). The narrative experiences of Hmong American adolescent males labeled “educationally ‘at risk.’” *Education and Urban Society*, 49(6), 593–615.

- Erickson, F. (2011). A history of qualitative inquiry in social and educational research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 43–58). Sage Publications.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>
- Franzen-Castle, L., & Smith, C. (2013). Shifts in Hmong culture: Competing medical frameworks. *Journal of Immigrant & Minority Health*, 15(4), 829–835.
- Gessler, M., Bohlinger, S., & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, O. (2021). International vocational education and training research: An introduction to the special issue. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education & Training*, 8(4), 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.8.4.1>
- Goodkind, J. R. (2006). Promoting Hmong refugees' well-being through mutual learning: Valuing knowledge, culture, and experience. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 37(1–2), 129–140. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-9003-6>
- Han, S. (2022). Default beliefs as a basis of social decision-making. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 26(12), 1026–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2022.09.004>
- Hang, A., & Walsh, N. (2021). Environmental factors for motivation of first-generation Hmong American college students in academic attainment. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 4(3), 142–154.

- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>
- Her-Xiong, Y., & Schroepfer, T. (2018). Walking in Two Worlds: Hmong End of Life Beliefs & Rituals. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care*, 14(4), 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15524256.2018.1522288>
- Her, P. (2022). Hmong American undergraduates and peer/sibling academic support. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, 17(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.12561>
- Her, P., & Xiong, S. (2023). Intergenerational storytelling and resilience among Hmong American college students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, 18 (1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.12762>
- Hopp, A. (2020). Loyal Soldier, Fearsome Terrorists: The Hmong as a Martial Race in Southeast Asia and the United States. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 21, 1C.
- Iannarelli, C. M. (2015). Stressing success: Examining Hmong student success in career and technical education. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 15(1), 1–22.
- Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E., & Van Anh, T. T. (2016). Individual Empowerment Is Not Enough: Using a Social Norms Lens to Understand the Limited Educational Uptake of Vietnam's Hmong Girls. *Policy Futures in Education*, 14(5), 539–555.
- Juang, L. P., & Meschke, L. L. (2015). Hmong American Young Adults' reflections on their immigrant parents. *Journal of Family Issues*, 38(9), 1313–1335. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x15581658>

- Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work*, 45(5), 439–447.
- Karnieli-Miller, Orit & Strier, Roni & Pessach, Liat. (2009). Power Relations in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative health research*. 19. 279-89.  
10.1177/1049732308329306.
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5), 26–41.
- Kolb., A. Y. & Kolb, D. A. (2009) *Meta-cognitive aspects of experiential learning*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878108325713>
- Konstantina Vasileiou, Julie Barnett, Susan Thorpe, & Terry Young. (2018). Characterizing and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>
- Kwan, Y. W. (2020). Negotiating Hmong cultural values and college expectations: Developing resilience in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61 (6), 736–752. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0071>
- Kwan, Y. Y. (2015). Microaggressions and Hmong American Students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 38(1), 23–44.
- Lamborn, S. D., & Moua, M. L. (2008). Normative family interactions. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 23(4), 411–437. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558407310772>

- Lauren N. Irwin, Jaime S. Miller, Katie Morgan, & Jodi Linley. (2023). A Critical Ecological Exploration of Peer Socialization Agents' Sense of Belonging. *Journal of College Student Development*, 64(5), 509–523.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2023.a911787>
- Lee, E. (1996). Asian American families: An overview. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (pp. 227-248). New York: Guilford Press.
- Lee, G. Y. (2006). The Shaping of Traditions: Agriculture and Hmong Society. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 6(1), 1-33
- Lee, G. Y. (2007). Diaspora and the predicament of origins: interrogating Hmong postcolonial history and identity. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 8.
- Lee, J. K., & Green, K. (2008). Hmong Parental Involvement and Support: A Comparison Between Families of High and Low Achieving High School Seniors. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 9, 1–27.
- Lee, J. S. (2022). Gendered pathways of cultural expectation: Southeast Asian daughters in U.S. higher education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 15 (3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000347>
- Lee, R. M., Jung, K. R., Su, J. C., Tran, A. G. T. T., & Bahrassa, N. F. (2009). The Family Life and Adjustment of Hmong American Sons and Daughters. *Sex Roles*, 60(78), 549–558.
- Lee, S. J., Park, E., & Wong, J.-H. S. (2017). Racialization, Schooling, and Becoming American: Asian American Experiences. *Educational Studies*, 53(5), 492–510.

- Lefever, S., Dal, M., & Matthíasdóttir, Á. (2007). Online data collection in academic research: advantages and limitations. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 38(4), 574–582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2006.00638.x>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Liamputtong P. (2019) Qualitative Inquiry. In: Liamputtong P. (eds) *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*. Springer, Singapore.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5251-4\\_53](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5251-4_53)
- Lor, M., Badenoch, N., & Yang, M. J. (2022). Technical Meets Traditional: Language, Culture, and the Challenges Faced by Hmong Medical Interpreters. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing : Official Journal of the Transcultural Nursing Society*, 33(1), 96–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10436596211039553>
- Lor, P. (2008). Key Life Experiences Contributing to Hmong Students' Matriculation. *Multicultural Education*, 16(1), 39–47.
- Lor, P. (2013). A Hmong professional woman's reflections and perspectives on the influences affecting the changing roles of Hmong women in America. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 20(1), 40–48.
- Lor, P. (2018). Voices of Hmong American Students on Their Diaspora. *Multicultural Education*, 26(1), 2–10.
- Lor, P., & Hutchison, R. (2017). Educational Careers of Hmong American Students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, 12(1), 1–22.  
<https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.1148>

- Lor, P. (2021). Hmong American Charter Schools: An Exploratory and Descriptive Study. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, 16(1), 1–40. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.1195>
- M Parvaresh-Masoud, & SH Varaei. (2018). Electronic Interview in Qualitative Research. 31(112), 1–5.
- Manning, J. (2017). In vivo coding. In Matthes, J. (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0270>
- Maxwell, J., Rusk, F., Nielsen, J., Guidara, A., Borges, E., & Lamberti, J. (2023). Pursuing student success in the library: a case study in peer mentor program transition, training and engagement. *Reference Services Review*, 51(2), 91–104. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-09-2022-0047>
- Mayra V. Robledo, Michael B. Edwards, Jason N. Bocarro, Andrew O. Behnke, & Jonathan M. Casper. (2022). Examination of Ecological Systems Contexts Within a Latino-Based Community Sport Youth Development Initiative. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2022.869589>
- Meeuwisse, M. Severiens, S. E. & Born, M. P. (2010). Reasons for withdrawal from higher vocational education. A comparison of ethnic minority and majority non-completers. *Studies in Higher Education*, 35(1), 93-111. DOI: 10.1080/03075070902906780

- Michaud, J. (1997). From Southwest China into Upper Indochina: an overview of Hmong (Miao) migrations. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 38(2), 119.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8373.00034>
- Minnesota Univ., M. C. for U. and R. A., Lao Family Community, I. . S. A. C., & Northwest Regional Educational Lab., P. O. (1984). *The Hmong Resettlement Study. Executive Summary*.
- Miyares, Ines M. (1997). "Changing Perceptions of Space and Place as Measures of Hmong Acculturation." *The Professional Geographer* 49(2): 214-224.
- Moua, M. (2018). Navigating Graduate Education as a First-generation, Hmong American Woman: An Autoethnography. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 19(1), 1–25.
- Moua, M. (2020). "Between two worlds": Hmong American women balancing culture and college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61 (4), 487–503.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0052>
- Mun, R. U., & Hertzog, N. B. (2019). The influence of parental and self-expectations on Asian American women who entered college early. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 63(2), 120–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986218823559>
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14, e67670. <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- National Center for Educational Statistics (2021). College Enrollment Rates. *The Condition of Education*.

- Nishio, K., & Bilmes, M. (1987). Psychotherapy with Southeast Asian American clients. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 18, 342-346
- Ngo, B., & Leet-Otley, J. (2011). Discourses about Gender among Hmong American Policymakers: Conflicting Views about Gender, Culture, and Hmong Youth. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 10(2), 99–118.
- Ngo, B. (2013). Culture Consciousness among Hmong Immigrant Leaders: Beyond the Dichotomy of Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Hybridity. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(5), 958–990.
- Ngo, B. (2017). The Costs of “Living the Dream” for Hmong Immigrants: The Impact of Subtractive Schooling on Family and Community. *Educational Studies*, 53(5), 450–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2016.1258361>
- Ngo, B., Dyke, E., & LoBello, J. (2018). Connecting as “Family” in Educative Relationships: Insights from a Media Program Serving Hmong Immigrant Youth. *Urban Education*, 53(9), 1126–1153.
- Ogunwole, S. U., Drewery, M. P., & Rio-Vargas, M. (2012). *The Population With a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2006–2010*. U.S. Census Bureau.
- Olivos, E. (2006). *The power of parents: A critical perspective of bicultural parent involvement in public schools*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Omori, K., & Kishimoto, K. (2019). The impact of language brokering on Hmong college students’ parent-child relationship and academic persistence. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 20, 1C.

- Osama Hidayat, & Yoshitaka Kajita. (2020). Influences of Culture in the Built Environment; Assessing Living Convenience in Kabul City. *Urban Science*, 4(44), 44. <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci4030044>
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93-6. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2001.00093.x>
- Ozaki, C. C., Olson, A. B., Johnston-Guerrero, M. P., & Pizzolato, J. E. (2020). Understanding Persistence Using a Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory. *Community College Review*, 48(3), 252–276.
- Pa Thor. (2020). Gender Theory and Cultural Considerations in Understanding Hmong Homicide-Suicide. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 21, 1–24.
- Pagulayan, E. S., Asuncion, J. E. L., Tamayao, A. I., Vecaldo, R. T., Mamba, M. T., & Paat, F. M. G. (2021). The Value of Economic and Cultural Capital to College Readiness among Filipino Senior High School Graduates. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 10(1), 174–184.
- Paik, S. J., Kula, S. M., Saito, L. E., Rahman, Z., & Witenstein, M. A. (2014). Historical Perspectives on Diverse Asian American Communities: Immigration, Incorporation, and Education. *TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD*, 116(8).
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Perlman, A. J. (2020). Southeast Asian Refugee-Learners: Identities Informing ESL Education and Support. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, 15(1), 1-16.
- Plotnikoff, G. A., Numrich, C., Wu, C., Yang, D., & Xiong, P. (2002). Hmong Shamanism: Animist spiritual healing in Minnesota. *Minnesota Medicine*, 85(6), 29–34.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 137-145.
- Progress 2050. (2015). *Who are Asian Americans?* Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/who-are-asian-americans/>
- Quang Duong Tran, Lee, S., & Khoi, S. (1996). Ethnic and Gender Differences in Parental Expectations and Life Stress. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 13(6), 515–526.
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*.
- Robbins, S. P., Chatterjee, P., & Canda, E. R. (2012). *Contemporary human behavior theory: A critical perspective for social work* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2015). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Russell, G. M., & Kelly, N. H. (2002, September). Research as interacting dialogic processes: Implications for reflexivity. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 3, No. 3).
- Salkind, N. J. (2010). *Encyclopedia of research design* (Vols. 1-0). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412961288
- Sengsouliya, S., & Vannasy, V. (2023). The pattern of reasons why minority students drop out: An empirical study of the Hmong minority in Laos. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 25, 1a.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63–75. Washington, DC: IOS Press.
- Slobodin, O., & de Jong, J. T. V. M. (2015). Mental health interventions for traumatized asylum seekers and refugees: What do we know about their efficacy? *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY*, 61(1), 17–26.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764014535752>
- Smith, J. A. (1994). Towards reflexive practice: Engaging participants as co-researchers or co-analysts in psychological inquiry. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 4(4), 253–260. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2450040405>
- Stone, A. A., Schneider, S., Smyth, J. M., Junghaenel, D. U., Couper, M. P., Wen, C., Mendez, M., Velasco, S., & Goldstein, S. (2024). A population-based investigation of participation rate and self-selection bias in momentary data capture and survey studies. *Current Psychology*, 43(3), 2074–2090.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04426-2>

- Suter, W. N. (2012). Qualitative data, analysis, and design. In *Introduction to educational research: A critical thinking approach* (pp. 342-386). SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483384443>
- Swick, K. J., & Williams, R. D. (2006). An Analysis of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Perspective for Early Childhood Educators: Implications for Working with Families Experiencing Stress. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(5), 371–378. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0078-y>
- Tan, G. (2019). Asian Americans in Today's U.S. Higher Education: An Overview of Their Challenges and Recommendations for Practitioners. *Journal of Student Affairs*, New York University, 15, 7–17.
- Tatman, A. W. (2004). Hmong history, culture, and acculturation: implications for counseling the Hmong. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(4), 222.
- Thao, Y. J. (2003). Empowering Mong Students: Home and School Factors. *Urban Review*, 35(1), 25–42.
- The 'remarkable religious transformation' of Vietnam's Hmong*. World Watch Monitor. (2018, August 17). <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/11/remarkable-religious-transformation-vietnams-hmong/>.
- The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Ethics*. (2018). SAGE Publications, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526435446>
- Thompson, T. L., Kiang, L., & Witkow, M. R. (2020). Discrimination, the Model Minority Stereotype, and Peer Relationships Across the High School Years.

*Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 49(9), 1884–1896.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01268-0>

Toft, J., & Ducklow, L. (2019). Perspectives from Hmong-American women about the first-generation college student experience in higher education. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 29(6), 455–472.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2019.1570887>

Uwe Flick. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526416070>

Uy, P. S. (2015). Supporting Southeast Asian American Family and Community Engagement for Educational Success. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, 10(2), 1–14.

Vang, P. D. (2013). Generational Differences among a Small Group of Hmong Americans. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 22(1), 76–92.

Vang, P. D., & Her, P. (2014). Teenage Marriage among Hmong American Women. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 24(2), 138–155.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2014.848683>

Vang, C.Y. (2012). Making Ends Meet: Hmong Socioeconomic Trends in the U.S. *Hmong Studies Journal* 13(2), 1-20.

Vang, C.T. (2016). *Hmong refugees in the new world: Culture, community and opportunity*. McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers.

Vang, K., & Lee, L. (2022). Remembering displacement: Generational narratives and educational motivation among Hmong youth. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 23, 1–28.

[https://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/uploads/4/5/8/7/4587788/vang\\_lee\\_hsj23.pdf](https://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/uploads/4/5/8/7/4587788/vang_lee_hsj23.pdf)

- Vang, T, & Flores, J (1999). “The Hmong Americans: Identity, Conflict, and Opportunity”. *Multicultural Perspectives*. 1 (4): 9-14.  
doi:10.1080/15210969909539923.
- Vasileiou K, Barnett J, Thorpe S, & Young T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1), 148. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>
- Vue, K., & Xiong, S. (2021). Cultural navigation and persistence among Hmong American college students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, 16(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.12452>
- Vue, P. (2015). The Vietnam War and Its Impacts on the Hmong. *Geopolitics*, 20(4), 749–752.  
doi: 10.1080/14650045.2015.1095592
- Vue, R. (2021). Trauma and resilience in the lives and education of Hmong American students: forging pedagogies of remembrance with critical refugee discourse. *Race, Ethnicity & Education*, 24(2), 282–301.
- Watt, Hillary. (2008). “The Power of the Spoken Word in Defining Religion and Thought: A Case Study.” *Hmong Studies Journal*. 9: 1-25.  
<http://hmongstudies.org/Watt2008.pdf>

- Wiesche, M., Jurisch, M. C., Yetton, P. W., & Krcmar, H. (2017). Grounded Theory Methodology in Information Systems Research. *MIS Quarterly*, *41*(3), 685-A9. <https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2017/41.3.02>
- Wu, K., Nagata, D. K., Kim, J. H. J., & Kim, S. I. (2018). Perception of Sibling Relationships and Birth Order Among Asian American and European American Emerging Adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, *39*(13), 3564–3585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18783465>
- Xiong, C. P. (2023). Toward HMoob-centered inquiries: Hmong student agency in higher education. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, *18*(2), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.12785>
- Xiong, E. T., Dauphin, B., & Weisfeld, C. (2018). The Influence of Hmong Americans' Acculturation and Cultural Identity on Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Mental Health Care and Services in Comparison to Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices. *Hmong Studies Journal*, *19*(2), 1–45.
- Xiong, S. (2023). “Determined to prove them all wrong”: The college aspirations of Hmong males. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *7*(1), 84–104. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/13728>
- Xiong, S., & Lam, S. Y. (2013). Factors affecting the success of Hmong college students in America. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, *41*(2), 132–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2012.713909>

- Xiong, S., & Vue, K. (2021). Patriarchy and perseverance: Hmong men, cultural continuity, and academic motivation. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 22, 1–25.  
[https://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/uploads/4/5/8/7/4587788/xiong\\_vue\\_hsj22.pdf](https://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/uploads/4/5/8/7/4587788/xiong_vue_hsj22.pdf)
- Xiong, T. T. (2019). Reflections on America’s higher education: My hmong voice. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2019-2028>
- Xiong, Y. S., (2023). Postsecondary Education Attainment of Hmong Americans: Evidence from the 2016-2020 American Community Survey. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 25, 1–31.
- Xiong, Z. B., Vue, R., & Yang, K. (2019). Influence of perceived parental involvement on Hmong children’s academic performance. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 20, 1–24.  
<https://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/uploads/4/5/8/7/4587788/xiongetalhsj20.pdf>
- Yang, K., & Pfeifer, M.E. (2004). Profile of Hmong educational attainment. In Hmong 2000 census publication: Data and analysis. Washington, DC and St. Paul, MN: Hmong National Development, Inc. and the Hmong Cultural and Resource Center
- Yang, T. (2021). “Fulfilling their dreams”: Education as intergenerational legacy in the Hmong American experience. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 24 (3), 385–407. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2021.0027>
- Zhan, Y. (2020). Motivated or informed? Chinese undergraduates’ beliefs about the functions of continuous assessment in their college English course. *Higher*

*Education Research & Development*, 39(5), 1055–1069.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1699029>

## Appendix: Interview Guide

**RQ:** How do Hmong college students describe how culture influences their educational experience?

1. Demographic Questions:

- Do you identify as Hmong?
- What is your age?
- How do you identify your gender?
- What college/university are you currently enrolled in?
- Are you a first generation student?
  - i. If no, who in your family attended college?
- What generation are you in terms of immigration status?

2. How significant or important was Hmong culture in the household where you were raised?

3. Describe the Hmong culture in which you were raised?

- Cultural expectations?
- Familial roles?
- Educational expectations?
  - 1. How were these expectations communicated?

4. How does Hmong culture influence your educational experience in college

- Personal identification with the Hmong culture [microsystem]
- Family [microsystem]
- Peers [microsystem]

- Family or peers interactions/experiences with other community members [exosystem]
  - Family or peers' interactions/experiences from work/school [mesosystem]
  - Hmong community [macrosystem]
  - Family generational timeline [chronosystem]
  - What are specific examples?
5. When you described Hmong culture, you said [insert participants response from question 3]. How did X influence your experience in college? [Repeat].
6. Is there anything else you think I should be asking to understand how the Hmong culture influences your educational experience?