

Fall 2017

Hmong in America: An Emergence of the American Identity

Nkauj hli Melinda Lo
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Lo, Nkauj hli Melinda, "Hmong in America: An Emergence of the American Identity" (2017). *Master's Theses*. 4881.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.tu8x-844w>

https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4881

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

HMONG IN AMERICA: AN EMERGENCE OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Justice Studies

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Nkauj-hli Lo

December 2017

© 2017

Nkauj-hli Lo

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

HMONG IN AMERICA: AN EMERGENCE OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY

by

Nkauj-hli Lo

APROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE STUDIES

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2017

Sang Hea Kil, Ph.D. Department of Justice Studies

Yoko Baba, Ph.D. Department of Justice Studies

Yue Yuan, Ph.D. Department of Justice Studies

ABSTRACT

HMONG IN AMERICA: AN EMERGENCE OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY

by Nkauj-hli Lo

The historical background of the Hmong ethnic group and immigration in regards to how the emergence of the American identity has impacted their cultural identity is examined in this thesis. A qualitative study was conducted to better understand the impacts of immigration and the reasons that younger generations have pushed to be one with the American identity. Drawing upon 10 in-depth interviews of second-generation children of Hmong immigrants, the findings show that the Hmong identity has lost its preservation through the Hmong ethnic group's experiences in the United States. The researcher found that the American identity affects the Hmong cultural identity in terms of assimilation because of the lack of historical recognition, racial tensions, conflicts between older and younger generations, and being American born. Immigration has caused the Hmong people to lose their identity because the demands placed upon them by the new host country. The emergence of the American identity is problematic due to the fear of becoming an unknown race as younger generations fail to preserve the Hmong identity.

This thesis is dedicated to
my parents,
without you guys none of my success would be possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper could not have been a success without the support of my family, friends, and those who have helped guide me through this process. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my best friend, Maria, for her endless patience and support through the most stressful years of my life.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Kil, for always challenging me beyond my own potential in the past two years of graduate school. Without the valuable guidance that she has provided, I would not have been able to excel to where I am today. I am also thankful for both Dr. Baba and Dr. Yuan for serving on my thesis committee. Their guidance has helped make this thesis become a success.

For my colleagues, I am grateful for being able to meet such an amazing and helpful cohort. Without them, this battle would never have been such a great win. To my friends, Daone and Maikue, thank you for being there since day one.

Most importantly, I would like to extend my love and appreciation to my parents, Michael and Marissa, along with my three siblings, Michael, Melydia and Melody, for their unconditional love and support. Thank you for supporting all my decisions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Chapter 1. The Hmong Ethnic Group	1
Chapter 2. Literature Review	8
The Hmong Diaspora	8
Theoretical Framework	12
Race Assimilation	13
Faulty Identification of Asian Americans	19
Chapter 3. Methods	23
Research Design	23
Sampling Frame	25
Analysis	26
Chapter 4. Results	28
Participants	28
Interview Results	30
Lack of Historical Recognition	30
Racial Tensions	33
Conflicts Between Older and Younger Generations	34
Being American Born	37
Chapter 5. Analysis and Discussion	45
Analysis	45
Lack of Historical Recognition	48
Racial Tensions	54
Conflicts Between Older and Younger Generations	59
Being American Born	69
Conclusion and Limitations	80
References	83
Appendix	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Overview of Participants	28
Table 2. Ethnic Identity.....	31
Table 3. Ability to Read, Write and Speak the Hmong Language	37
Table 4. Religious Practices.....	40

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Participants whose family emphasizes learning Hmong traditions and culture	33
Figure 2. Elders response to participants' decision-making	36
Figure 3. Participants' level of balancing the Hmong culture and western culture	39
Figure 4. Preference in language usage	41

Chapter 1. Introduction

The Hmong Ethnic Group

The Hmong ethnic minority group has historically has been a distinct culture in areas in Southeast Asia with strong family traditions. Scholars have found that they were in China long before the Chinese were, going back as far as 2700 B.C. (Vang, 2011). In the mid-19th century, the Hmong resided in different areas in Southeast Asia including Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. Their lifestyles included parallel routines in jungles and open land, depending on agricultural practices for survival (Koltyk, 1993). Despite being around various Asiatic cultures, they were able to keep their traditions inherently their own (Duffy, Harmon, Ranard, Thao, & Yang, 2004).

During the 1960s, the everyday lifestyle began to change for the Hmong ethnic group because of surrounding war conflicts of the Indochina Wars. The First and Second Indochina Wars were a series of battles fought in Southeast Asia, generally against Vietnam as a political distinction created by France (Steibel, 1972). As a series of battles following the end of World War II, the first Indochina War, which lasted from December 19, 1946, to August 1, 1954, was a fight to make Vietnam an independent state. The conclusion to this Indochina War saw the end of French control in Indochina in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia (Taylor, 1985). The Geneva Conference in 1954 in Switzerland attempted to settle issues within Indochina. The Vietnamese entered a negotiation at the Geneva Conference with 14 other nations for a peaceful withdrawal from Southeast Asia, and dividing Vietnam into the communist north, as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the non-communist south as the state of Vietnam (Steibel, 1972). This created the

Geneva Accords, which temporarily separated Vietnam into the northern zone and a southern zone along the 17th parallel for two years until the 1956 elections in order to create a unified country. French forces would regroup towards the southern region of Vietnam, while the Viet Minh would move to the north during the formation of an independent nation after 75 years under French colonialism.

In addition to the Geneva Accords, an agreement was made in regards to the termination of hostilities between Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos (Dan, 1954). The situations within these three countries were different and independent of each other; therefore, it was demanded that they all should be treated separately. The agreement would declare Laos and Cambodia as neutral states with the request to withdraw any forces established from the First Indochina War within those regions. The United States also signed an agreement to disassociate itself since the agreement stated that foreign countries outside the Southeast Asian region would not get involved if there were any disagreements (Taylor, 1985).

Although divided, the northern region of Vietnam wanted to take over South Vietnam because of its agricultural richness, natural resources, and greater industrialization. This became the start of the second Indochina War from November 1, 1955 to April 30, 1975. The war was primarily fought between North Vietnam and the Viet Cong against South Vietnam along the borders of Cambodia and Laos (Conley, 1968). Viet Cong was the name given to the National Liberation Front located in South Vietnam as a military branch of communists supported by North Vietnam. In 1973, the Paris Peace Accords were signed by the United States, North and South Vietnam, as well as the Viet Cong and

served as a mutual agreement to establish peace in Vietnam and stop the war between the north and south. While the United States delayed the process, North Vietnamese military forces continued to build their infrastructure. On January 23, 1973, President Richard Nixon announced that the United States would defend the South Vietnamese against North Vietnamese aggression by providing military supplies to the south. Though the United States specifically agreed to the replacement of arsenal equipment, a majority of Democrats in the 94th Congress did not follow through (Steibel, 1972). This resulted in the surrender of the state of South Vietnam and the fall of Saigon in 1975 (Leary, 1995).

Geographically, Laos was a major geopolitical player because it was seen as the center of many surrounding countries in Southeast Asia. Of the countries involved in the Indochina conflicts, Laos was the least populated in an area of 91,405 square miles since the majority of its land was covered by massive forests (Dan, 1954). Though having the smallest population, it was also the most impacted during the Indochina Wars because of its centralized location. Since 1890, Laos had been a part of the French colony until a communist movement known as the Pathet Lao (largely funded by North Vietnam) began to grow. Although the purpose of the Geneva Accords hypothetically served to end the war, it did not eliminate militarized tactics from North Vietnam. The signing of the Geneva Accords had declared Laos as a neutral state, but the United States had also come to realize that North Vietnam was not going to withdraw its forces from Laos. Because of previous agreements the United States had made, such as the Geneva Accords and the Paris Peace Accords, America's intervention in the Indochina conflicts would begin an illegal American paramilitary operation in Laos (Steibel, 1972).

Alongside the war between North and South Vietnam, the Secret War was conducted by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (Foster, 1998). The Secret War supported the Royal Lao Government in the Laotian Civil War against the Pathet Lao, which received help from the communist region of Vietnam. The United States had established its own ways to become involved by reinforcing air operations, which would technically allow them to make a claim that they were not on the ground and intervening in Indochina conflicts. The debate over Laos became another American involvement in order to prevent it from turning into “another Vietnam” or, in other words, another state of communism (Shaplen, 1970, p. 478). As a battle against the backdrop of Vietnam, it was a great conflict between irregular proxies for the control of the Laotian panhandle with the participation of North and South Vietnam military forces (Shaplen, 1970).

In order to stop the spread of communism to the neutral state of Laos, the United States wanted help from the Hmong ethnic minority group since they were familiar with the regions of Laos. Assistance was given to the Hmong military leader, General Vang Pao, to create a secret army of ground soldiers while most American troops were active in air operations (Ruane, 2002). All troops trained by the Central Intelligence Agency were on the front line as ground soldiers, while most American troops managed control from their air operations. In 1964, their campaign became a massive bombing operation flying 500 attacks over Laos and over 300 attacks in North Vietnam on a daily basis (Ely, 1990). The United States bombing operation dropped over two million tons of ordinance in 590,000 bombing missions equivalent to a “plane load of bombs every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years” (Ruane, 2002, p. 398).

By 1975, American troops and the Central Intelligence Agency withdrew from their missions, leaving the Hmong foot soldiers under communist control since they continued to reside in the jungles of Laos (Lindsey, 2002). They continued to be involved in a large-scale war with their special operations along with commando raids, costing them over \$1.5 billion per year for about 10 years (McCoy, 1996). American interventions did not deter the communists during the war, which led to many deaths and casualties. At a rate 10 times higher than American soldiers, over 100,000 Hmong lost their lives trying to save thousands of Americans from being attacked by army units of North Vietnam (Legacies of War, 2010). As Laos fell into communist hands, the United States military and the Central Intelligence Agency withdrew from their many missions and left the partnerships they had formed. Many of those were Hmong foot soldiers who would remain to face genocide due to retaliation (Lindsey, 2002).

Those who could escape found shelter in Thailand refugee camps and, because of their participation in the Secret War with the United States, some were granted the opportunity to come to America. Those who came to the United States were considered the lucky ones. However, they were forced to assimilate into a culture they were not familiar with. Those who were left behind were stuck in genocide and the torture of unexploded cluster bombs (Koltyk, 1993).

There is not an abundant amount of documented history regarding the Hmong ethnic group, and many do not understand why they are in the United States today. The Hmong ethnic group originated from China and migrated to the areas of Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and other areas in Southeast Asia because of unrest. In the 1970s, they immigrated to the

United States after the Secret War conducted by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Living in America, they remember their participation in the Secret War and having to flee in order to avoid retaliation from communist groups in Asia. Before this war, they lived peaceful lives and relied on heavy agricultural practices where cultural and traditional roles helped maintain a stable family (Lee, 2001). After the war, their lives changed drastically after immigrating to a western culture. Though they did not have many resources, they managed to create a lifestyle that worked for them in their new home (Julian, 2004).

The Hmong ethnic group is not well known to many people in the United States often because they resided in the jungles of other countries and did not have territory that was theirs specifically. In United States history, it is rare that students learn of the Hmong ethnic group even though they are a part of American history. The lack of historical context on the Hmong population, limited scholarly research on their immigration experiences, and the impacts of immigration on the preservation of the younger Hmong population as they continue to blend into a western culture and American new identity will be examined in this study. The Hmong ethnic group and how immigrating to the United States has influenced their loss of cultural identity while they assimilate into an American identity will also be addressed. To do this, the focus of this study will be more specifically on the younger generation and how they have been pushed to pursue their lifestyle in the emergence of the American identity.

The author utilized interview research on second-generation children of Hmong immigrants to understand their experiences of balancing their Hmong and American

identities based on the segmented assimilation theory. The history of the Secret War and why it caused the Hmong ethnic group to immigrate to the west will be discussed in Chapter 2. The issues of the emerging American identity and how the Hmong have maintained their own culture and traditions is also discussed. The methodology of how the author gathered the interviews that were conducted will be explained in Chapter 3. Visuals of what was retrieved from the in-depth interviews, such as the participants' personal experiences and perception regarding their cultural identity, will be displayed in Chapter 4. Finally, thematic patterns from the findings of the interviews were analyzed. These patterns explain why and how the American identity is problematic to the preservation of the Hmong identity will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The Hmong Diaspora

The largest Hmong Diaspora occurred when they fled Laos after the Secret War. At the end of the Secret War in Laos, the Hmong were scattered as refugees because they were disrupted by massive operations created by both Vietnamese communist and United States missions. About 750 Hmong came to America to resettle permanently at the end of the war in 1973; by the end of 1980, approximately 27,000 were admitted into the United States. Their population grew to 100,000 and nearly doubled to 200,000 by the end of 1999 (Yang, 2001). As of 2015, the Hmong census has estimated there are over 300,000 Hmong are in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Those who came to the United States found themselves in a new cultural and geographic area that soon began to alter the traditional Hmong religion, language, and skills (Adler, 1995). Traditions became harder to preserve because families had to learn how to fit into the American lifestyle where new and old ideas would essentially distance older generations from younger generations (Mannheim, 1970). Slowly, immigrants had to reconstruct their lives around new social norms that came at the price of learning unfamiliar constructs. For the Hmong who have always lived solely on agricultural skills, these unfamiliar constructs included, but were not limited to, becoming familiar with western laws, learning a new language, obtaining security through income, understanding technology, and extracurricular activities (Adler, 1995). Life in America would change the Hmong culture because children of immigrants would learn to adapt and follow the customs of their peers. Future generations of immigrant families will be affected by the

demand of the American lifestyle that continues to clash with their attempts to retain their cultural heritage (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Those who continued to carry on the politics of Laos formed organizations led by the Hmong General, Vang Pao, that attempted to help the Lao People's Democratic Republic. On June 4, 2007, General Vang Pao and his accomplices were arrested for attempting to engage in a violent overthrow of the Laos government. Upon their release on bail on July 12, 2007, some believed that General Vang Pao would try again to help regain their homeland from the communist Pathet Lao. There were also many who accepted the reality of their new home in America (Lee, 2008).

The Hmong culture consists of both physical and intangible elements. Physical elements include musical instruments such as the Hmong flute and mouth harp, women's traditional clothing and ornaments, tools such as the carrying basket and Hmong hatchet, arts, rituals, written artifacts, as well as many other physical artifacts (Lee, 2008). Intangible elements include language, social organization, religion, traditional music, social values and norms, history, myths and tales. These elements are considered the general aspects of the traditional Hmong cultures that would be found among the Hmong in Southeast Asia. In the United States, however, traditional costumes and tools are more commonly acquired as heritage goods instead of integral everyday usage. As the western society rushes immigrants' assimilation process through demanding expectations, the Hmong do not have the time to learn or continue to practice their own cultural skills (De Bord, 2006). These expectations introduce a way of living that is not as simplified as

waking up in the morning to a farmland full of crops or having children stay home every day to help maintain a supply of food.

Relocation often leads to the need for identity reconstruction because of experiences living in previous settlement (Davis, 1979). It is obvious that the Hmong ethnic group has experienced new cultural elements added from the American culture. The use of “Hmonglish,” which is a mix of the Hmong and English language, has become more common especially since second-generation Hmong cannot communicate fully in their native tongue.

Displacement in America has forced the Hmong away from traditional resources, which creates a fear that younger generations will borrow more from the mainstream culture. The impact from the Secret War relocation has been that the Hmong have become exposed to current western ideas and opportunities in America (Yang, 2001). Access to western culture permits exposure to new materials such as electronic equipment, new language, skills, and talents that have produced a new sense of values different from Hmong traditional values. In addition to becoming distant from traditional cultural resources, America’s public education system fails to teach its students topics from the Indochina Wars. Younger Hmong generations are even more separated from learning about their roots especially since students gain most of their knowledge from their time spent at school (Hsia, 1988).

The Secret War, derived from the Indochina Wars, is ignored in public school education in the United States. Among the primary and secondary academic curricula, the current framework of history and social science education received in classrooms today is

structured to cover the development of the nation around European political institutions. Although the history and social science curricula are required to be updated every seven years, there have been little to no changes since 1986 (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). Because of this, there is a gap between schools and the historical content of a multicultural curriculum since the contextual academics surrounding history are selective. This especially affects children of immigrants because they may not otherwise be able to gain an understanding of how their historical background could be significant.

In 1988, the California Board of Education approved standards for primary and secondary education to highlight significant points of history limited to United States history and geography. It was not until Assembly Bill 78 when social studies instruction was required to “include instruction on the Vietnam War, including the “Secret War” in Laos and the roles of the Hmong and other Southeast Asians in the War” (Reyes, 2003). Passed in 2003, the bill also encouraged recording testimonial statements from those involved in the wars relating to Vietnam in oral or video form as part of curricula development (Reyes, 2003). Even though the bill called for the Indochina wars to be taught in primary and secondary schools, it was not successful because there is not a lot of reliable information about the wars despite resources available to teach it. Keeping it veiled controls what information is delivered to the public. The secret involvement of the United States in Laos during the Vietnam War and the subsequent act of ignoring that history has had severe consequences for the Hmong population in terms of having to flee the war zone to avoid retaliation and adjusting to a new country and culture in the West.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research will focus on the segmented assimilation theory. The focus of the present study is to answer the question of how the historically strong roles that identified a functional family in traditional Hmong culture would conflict with the American lifestyle. In the melting pot theory, Israel Zangwill first combined romantic denouement with a utopian celebration to complete the intermixing of culture (Shumsky, 1975). He further combined the metaphor of a melting pot with the United States as a new promised land. The melting pot was a metaphor used in the 1780s for a heterogeneous society to become more homogeneous and melt together as one common culture (U. S. Census Bureau, 2005). Mainly used to describe immigrants who have migrated to the United States, Samavar, Porter, and McDaniel (2011) suggested that the elements of different cultural backgrounds would essentially assimilate into the American identity. As the idea of the melting pot became equated with Americanization, it sees that the American identity has been merged to a social construction of whiteness.

The segmented assimilation theory is based on the idea that the United States is now diverse and segmented by race and class of an unequal society. Different segments are then available to immigrants where they may assimilate; however, this theory asserts that there are different acculturations. Consonant acculturation is when parents and children assimilate at the same pace, while selective acculturation is where both agree on specific assimilations. It is considered dissonant acculturation when children begin to assimilate more quickly than their parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The segmented assimilation theory further defines that children of immigrants become more incorporated into the host society that, in this case, would be the United States. Becoming more incorporated into the United States society is a natural process where ethnic groups begin to share the common culture in order to gain equality and access to a society (Zhou, 1997b) as demonstrated through the melting pot metaphor. Melting into the culture of a society includes the gradual abandonment of old culture while moving towards assimilation. Through this perspective, immigrants will essentially go through a process of identifying with the ethnicity of the dominant group that corresponds to distinct modes of immigrant adaptation (Raumbaut, 1994).

Race Assimilation

There is an abundant amount of differences among the one-, 1.5-, and two- generation immigrants in terms of not only age but experience as well. First-generation immigrants are identified as those who came as adults and were born in another country. The 1.5-generation immigrants are those who were born in a foreign country but have grown up in the United States. Second-generation immigrants are those who were born in the United States with at least one parent born in a foreign country (Taylor, 2013).

First-generation immigrants generally face an assimilation process of adapting to the American culture based on what is expected by the mainstream culture. Traditionally, immigration has had a negative effect on self-esteem, happiness, and identity, which are heavily associated with first-generation immigrants. Such effects are possible because this straight-line assimilation compels them to seek advancement socially and economically (Harker, 2001). Parents realize that the demand to learn English is

necessary as their children are sent to school in the American system (Lucy, 1997).

Shifting into a new culture and lifestyle, first-generation immigrants face the decisions of raising their children in the conflicting roles of two different cultures; one of which would be their own heritage and the other, which would be the western culture.

Immigrant children of the 1.5 generation usually feel burdened by more family responsibility than those who are U.S. born. Jo (2002) found that immigrant children are vulnerable to psychosocial difficulties because of new cultural surroundings. As they leave their familiar homeland, they will experience anxiety and depression because of their established social relations (James, 1997). The 1.5-generation undergoes the toughest search for identity while simultaneously trying to hold onto their ethnic identity while gaining an American identity. Because of this, they often feel alienated by both identities (Jo, 2002).

For the second-generation children, however, there is an obvious shift: as the first-generation struggles to adjust in a new world, the second-generation battles a fight to forget the old (Zimmerman, Zimmerman, & Constant, 2007). Since second-generation immigrants no longer have the same appreciation towards their heritage, they lose their ability to relate to stronger family ties (Taylor, 2013). Because they were born in the United States, they have been able to advance beyond previous generations. Although they continue the tradition of striving for higher measures of education and socioeconomic attainment (Brunick & Maier, 2010), living in America causes second-generation immigrants to disregard their heritage through the process of what is popularly called the “melting pot.” Being able to adapt well within western cultures stresses the

relationship between younger and older generations because of different lifestyles and the standard of living in the United States. As future generations follow this trend, this pattern will eventually reduce or eliminate a foreign culture's identity due to the demands of the western culture.

As a significant part of the United States population, children of immigrants are quickly growing to find that they are defined by how well their adaptation process compliments the whiteness of the western culture. The assimilation model explains that groups lose their ethnicity in order to identify as an American. This means that immigrants are controlled socially, legally, and by pressured assimilation into the American identity. United States immigration policies continue to follow the trend of the past that has shaped and altered immigrant families as a form of social control. Immigration reform has been extended to assume that migration itself is a risk factor (Landale, 2011). The United States has used immigration policies to keep a visible line between the dominant race in America and all other races by transfiguring the population into gender ratios, geographic distribution patterns, and socioeconomic statuses of each group. Through this, the American lifestyle demands a common perception that is a structure of pressured assimilation since first-generation immigrants have faced struggles of fitting into this complex phenomenon of whiteness (Haney-Lopez, 2006).

Having experienced this sense and demand of whiteness, Roediger (1999) suggests that, in America, there is an obvious operation of white privilege that has made it difficult for other races to gain equal opportunities. America has formed a normality that has shaped preconceptions of different races to create a hierarchy of a racial gap. Because the

dominant society creates social biases of discrimination, it is difficult for many to adjust (McDonald & Balgopal, 1998). As developed in the 18th century, the melting pot theory has expected all immigrants to assimilate into the American culture; however, it has not been an easy task. For those who strive to fit into this category, they would have to drift away from their cultural identity because of its incompatibility with American culture. With this ideology, immigrants either have the option to retain their cultural identity or to assimilate.

Race is a form of social control that contributes to how a group can advance collectively (Social and Democracy Online, 2011). New generations of immigrant children are losing the connections that bind them to their old world, which leaves them to evaluate their everyday lifestyles with the standards of their new country. Having had differences in their level of education and employment, immigrants have shown that social mobility is not unidirectional (Zhou, 1997a). The gap between the rich and poor has kept many immigrant minority groups in poverty. In addition, the culture among young Americans' has made it difficult for there to be a relationship between them and more traditional immigrants. There is an assumption that diverse groups share and gain equal access to the American lifestyle; however, that process moves toward assimilation in the categories of culture, structure, identification, and attitude. This method of immigration control prevents society from reflecting what it would look like if immigrants shaped their own lives rather than having their lives shaped by social capital.

Research has found that race was a creation by groups in early America who used laws to divide races economically (Allen, 1997). In *White by Law: The Legal*

Construction of Race, Haney-Lopez (2006) showed that courts used case decisions to expand the characteristics of whiteness at the expense of foreigners. He reflects migration patterns of racial restrictions through U.S. immigration and naturalization laws from the 1880s to 1965 as a system of constructing races by shaping physical appearances, creating racial meanings to physical features, and establishing material conditions for race. As an ideology, law also operates to shape how people think about the world they inhabit. It weakens the sense of cultural identity by operating an apparent system of racial categories. Accepting the assumptions of racial hierarchy infers that equality will not be achieved as long as nonwhites continue to abide by this rationale (Haney-Lopez, 2006).

Hing (1993) contends that even though Asian Americans were able to migrate to America, every aspect of immigration policies both before and after 1965 transformed them by their limitations in America. Immigration laws expressed what America thought about specific groups in terms of how well these groups would assimilate into western culture. Hing demonstrates that immigration laws were dependent on how well America was able to keep Asian Americans in control.

Elders have resisted younger generations' transformation and alteration of cultural practices and gender roles because of the fear of becoming Americanized. Hmong elders believe that, in order to maintain their culture, preservation relies upon the ability of adhering to ideas regarding gender (Lee, 2001). However, younger generations have started to lose traditional values and speak in a broken language. As a result, younger generations have also been up against the differences of the Hmong and American cultures when attempting to establish their identity to fit in. Children of immigrants are

quickly growing to find that they are defined by how well their adaptation process compliments the western culture. This, however, is also bounded by how well they are able to comprehend the culture itself, stemming the process of acquiring the common goals of communication (Brunick & Maier, 2010).

Recent research has confirmed that children of immigrants undergo an enormous amount of stress that comes from having to combine the context of two different cultures (McCarthy, 1998). Since it is important for immigrant children to master the English language, it also pushes them into the mainstream of education (McCarthy, 1998). They essentially have to establish their own sense of identity by balancing their roles in the family and in the new society. In this case, they straddle between two cultures; they cannot fully identify with either group, and they will eventually have to face an emotional choice between their parents' culture and the norms they are exposed to at school (McCarthy, 1998).

To avoid racial prejudice and discrimination, children usually try to adjust to what is expected by their peers and mainstream society. Since immigrant children pick up the American culture quickly, peer influence often makes them feel that their heritage is unimportant (Weissboard, 2002). Inter-generational conflicts are heavily weighed upon as parents begin to notice the acculturation of their children. Even parents have to choose between forming an American identity to make a reasonable living or spend time with their children to teach them about their cultural heritage (Weissboard, 2002). Though it is not impossible to balance both roles, it is still not an easy task: spending time teaching children the importance of cultural history takes away time that could be used to make an

income. Focusing more on gaining financial security for better living conditions also lessens the chances that children will learn about their cultural heritage. Since immigration itself culturally separates children from parents, many families face relationship hardships because of this forced assimilation.

Faulty Identification of Asian Americans

According to Pew Research Center (2017), Asian Americans are the fastest growing group in the United States in terms of education and income. Research has found that they are very satisfied in their success. Of 18,205,898 total United States Asian Americans, 14% define themselves as Americans, 19% as Asian Americans, and 62% as their country of origin. Sharing some characteristics, they stand out for their success since most believe that there are more opportunities in the west compared to their home countries. A great number of Asian Americans believe that hard work pays off and they place strong emphasis on higher education, career goals, and family. They are described as a group who are changing rapidly in numbers and in conformation, socioeconomic status, education, and occupation (Hsia, 1988).

“Asian American” has been used as a term and category to describe Asiatic populations since the 1960s since most rejected the term “Oriental” because of its stereotypes (Uba, 2003). Since the 1965 Immigration Act, Asian Americans have continued to immigrate to the United States. Despite being viewed as a model Asian immigrant group, and despite their sacrifices while helping the American government during the Vietnam War, the Hmong are still unknown and misunderstood by American society (Tracy, Leong, & Glidden, 1986).

Making up 5.8% of the United States total population, Asian Americans actually represent groups from many different backgrounds that are simply categorized under the umbrella term of “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.” Asian Americans make up dozens of countries in the Far Eastern, Southeast Asia, and Indian regions. Each group, although grouped together under this umbrella term comes with a different path to America. They differ in culture, migration experiences, skills, values, beliefs, language, income, and education (Uba, 2003). The term “Asian American and Pacific Islander” is shown to include 48 different ethnic groups from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, and the Pacific Islands (Collegeboard, 2008). When trying to understand these different groups, there are more differences than similarities in the Asian American and Pacific Islander composite that many researchers fail to distinguish. There are different levels of income, education, as well as proficiency in western civilization that are often lumped into one description to explain all groups as one.

In the United States, the six largest Asian origin groups make up of about 83% of the total Asian American population. They include Chinese with a population of 4,010,114, Filipino with a population of 3,416,840, Indian with a population of 3,183,063, Vietnamese with a population of 1,737,433, Korean with a population of 1,706,822, and Japanese with a total of 1,304,286 (Pew Research Center, 2017). The percentage of Asian Americans in higher education shows that Indians have the highest percentage while Vietnamese have the lowest percentage; 70% of Indians have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 26% of Vietnamese who have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. In between those two groups, 53% of Koreans, 51% of Chinese, 47% Filipino,

and 46% of the Japanese populations have a bachelor's degree or higher (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to Asian American & Pacific Islander (2017) data, when Asian Americans are viewed as one single category, their educational attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher is 50% compared to 31% of white, 19% of black, and 14% of Latino individuals.

Problems arise when categorizing these many Asian groups together under a broad umbrella term. Viewing Asian Americans under this term can blur the differences between the groups by promoting stereotypical ideas (Uba, 2003). The needs of different Asian American and Pacific Islanders have been affected by immigration history through immigration quotas and employee preferences. Those granted entry to the United States are usually educated and trained, yet, the rate of those who are granted entry also vary by country. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong immigrants are refugees that created a Southeast Asian population. On the other hand, immigrants from Taiwan, China, and Korea are admitted because of their skills.

Without the access to disaggregate data on the different Asian American groups, researchers will not be able to identify groups properly that are underrepresented (Asian American & Pacific Islander, 2017). Because there is limited understanding about different Asian and Pacific Islanders, the current study is significant in that a group that is understudied among Asian Americans—the Hmong ethnic minority—will be studied. In existing research, differences between these groups are not that well documented. The Hmong have an interesting story but, because American history does not recognize their involvement in the Secret War, their stories are rarely heard. The focus of this study will

be filling that research gap to help understand how immigration has influenced the younger Hmong population as they continue to shift into the western culture. Conducting interview research on second-generation immigrants is significant in this study because they are the group that has grown apart from their cultural identity as they were born in the United States. Focusing on this group will determine whether the emergence of the American identity is problematic to the Hmong identity.

Chapter 3. Methods

Research Design

In order to fill the gap of limited research and context that exists regarding the Hmong population, qualitative research provides the opportunity of recording their experiences. Interview research is the central source of social science research as a foundation of social interaction (Rapley, 2009). Face-to-face interviews have been the main technique used in qualitative research because live-session questionnaires allow real-time spontaneity between the interviewer and interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006). Qualitative interview research is useful when trying to learn about and understand an interviewee's experiences during real-time conversations (McNamara, 1999). It provides an understanding of what interviewees say (Kvale, 1996) by allowing information to be obtained and clarified when needed, which is usually more difficult to obtain in other research methods. Interview research is especially useful when trying to understand experiences in real-time conversations (McNamara, 1999).

For the current study, the researcher conducted interviews to determine whether immigration has impacted the preservation of the younger Hmong population in terms of identity as they continue to shift into the western culture. The qualitative research design specifically allowed the researcher to explore the qualitative perspective and experience of Hmong individuals who have experienced a shift in their cultural values because of the western culture. The in-depth interview using structured questions comprised two different sections. One section included demographic questions that asked the interviewees about their gender, generation, residency, age, income, marital status, and

education. The second section consisted of in-depth open interview questions directed toward second-generation children of immigrants regarding their experiences with their cultural backgrounds and western culture.

The researcher conducted individual in-depth face-to-face interviews of second-generation Hmong individuals in order to understand better their decisions and experiences living in America. The researcher chose to study the younger generation to understand the transitions that they have undergone or are currently going through in order to balance their identity. This helped to evaluate their outlook about identity and how they preserve their Hmong identity while growing up into an American identity.

Because the researcher studied a group that is not well recognized, this type of research has helped to maintain and preserve the voices of the Hmong ethnic group. In order to decrease social or personal harm to the interviewee, the interviewer made sure there were no requests for personal information that could be used to identify the interviewee (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003). Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy and anonymity of participants and to associate the participants' responses without revealing their identity (Grow & Wiles, 2008). Location and names were also changed to protect participants' identities. Before the interviews were conducted, an informed consent form was presented to each participant to clarify the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the research. The researcher further acknowledged that participants had the right to refuse or skip any question.

During the time of the interviews, field notes were collected to record participant responses. In addition, the interviews were audio-recorded (with permission) in order to

ensure the accuracy of the transcribed field notes. Transcription is the write up of the interviewees' statements done by the researcher to record each question and response (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2001). Interviews were recorded using audio recording software. Being able to work with audio data, the researcher was able to listen to the audio recording while reading transcriptions to ensure accuracy when documenting interviewees' response (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Focus points of the interview concentrated on questions on the Secret War, the experience of being children of immigrants, and practices in the American culture.

Sampling Frame

The procedure for selecting these participants was chosen through a non-probability sampling method known as snowball sampling. The snowball sampling method is good for hard-to-reach populations and that gathers more participants through a chain referral (Penrod, Preston, Cain, & Starks, 2003). This type of sampling is best for the Hmong population because it is a less accessible population, and it will help the researcher enlist more volunteer participants.

The researcher began by identifying individuals who met the criteria for the study. Then, the researcher asked participants to suggest others who could be appropriate for the study. When in contact with the interviewees, the researcher scheduled a day and time that was convenient for the participants' face-to-face interviews. As a type of non-probability sampling, it is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain of individuals who share the same knowledge (Tongco, 2007). The researcher selected participants based on what was known about the interviewee and his or her

experiences. Because the Hmong population has little historical context, this allowed for participants to elaborate on their experiences to better understand their stories. The researcher had a goal of completing 10 interviews of Hmong individuals in California. Ten participants were chosen by the researcher to keep responses varied and controlled. When there are too many interviews, the researcher may not be able to focus on important and in-depth patterns. The only requirements for selecting participants were based on the following four criteria: 1) Hmong, 2) over 18 years, 3) second-generation immigrants, and 4) currently living in the United States.

Analysis

The qualitative analysis process included the organization and preparation of 10 interviews. Also known as framework analysis, the researcher collected the interview information and began the analysis first by transcribing the data. After organizing the interviews, field notes and audio recordings were analyzed by organizing details from different generations to understand any transitions or similarities. The framework analysis retain the accuracy of what the interviewees said in their own words to limit discrepancy. Following that, the reduction of what is meaningful and transforming raw data simplified the framework of what the research question was trying to achieve (Kathwohl, 1998).

Attaching codes or labels to different themes helped to group and compare pieces of information provided by the interviews. As the core of qualitative data analysis, it is meaningful to identity patterns and themes in order to better identify and interpret their meanings (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Being able to sort through similar phrases

helped determine distinct differences between findings. It was important to be able to review for possible themes that were visible in order to find subsequent patterns. These steps helped organized the data for the study.

Chapter 4. Results

The results of the interview questions and whether the emergence of the American identity is problematic to the Hmong identity because of the stigma of whiteness and how immigration to the United States has influenced the loss of the Hmong cultural identity while assimilating into the American identity are discussed in this chapter. The researcher was able to conduct 10 in-depth interviews of second-generation Hmong individuals who are children of Hmong immigrants. Of those 10 interviews, there were five women and five men (see Table 1).

Table 1

Overview of Participants

	Male	Female	All
Age			
24 or younger	2	5	7
25 or older	3	0	3
Education			
High school	1	0	1
Some college	1	3	4
4-year degree	3	2	5
Marital Status			
Married	0	0	0
Never married	5	5	10

Participants

1. Jake is a 22-year-old male of the second-generation. His parents immigrated from Laos to the United States in the 1980s after the Secret War already ended. Jake is the youngest son in his family. His highest level of education is secondary school, and he has never been married.

2. Mary is a 24-year-old female of the second-generation. Her parents immigrated to the United States in 1992 and are currently living in Chico, California. Mary is the oldest daughter in her family and the second oldest child. She has a four-year degree, and she has never been married.

3. Donna is a 24-year-old female of the second-generation. Her family immigrated to the United States in 1991. Donna is the second youngest daughter in her family. Her highest level of education is a four-year degree, and she has never been married.

4. Maddi is a 22-year-old female of the second-generation. Her family immigrated to the United States in 1990. Maddie is the second youngest daughter in the family. She is still currently pursuing her four-year degree, and she has never been married.

5. Cindy is a 23-year-old female of the second-generation. Her family immigrated to the United States in 1992. Cindy is the youngest child in her family. She is still currently pursuing her four-year degree, and she has never been married.

6. Charles is a 25-year-old male of the second-generation. His family immigrated to the United States a few years before he was born. Charles is the second oldest son in his family. His highest level of education is a four-year-degree, and he has never been married.

7. Phil is a 24-year-old male of the second-generation. His family immigrated to the United States sometime between 1975 and 1977 due to the Secret War. Phil is the second to youngest son in his family. His highest level of education is a four-year degree, and he has never been married.

8. Larry is a 33-year-old male of the second-generation. His family immigrated to the United States in 1975 directly as the Secret War ended. Larry is the oldest son in his family. His highest level of education is a four-year degree, and he has never been married.

9. Oliver is a 26-year-old male of the second-generation. His family immigrated to the United States in 1987. Oliver is the youngest son in his family. His highest level of education is a four-year degree, and he has never been married.

10. Jane is a 22-year-old female of the second-generation. Her family immigrated to the United States in 1980. Jane is one of the older daughters in her family. She is currently pursuing a four-year degree, and she has never been married.

Interview Results

The researcher organized the interview results into the following four themes: lack of historical recognition, racial tensions, conflicts between older and younger generations, and being American born. These four themes are broken down and guided by questions that were asked during the interviews.

Lack of historical recognition.

- What do you identify as your ethnic identity? Why?

This question is important because the researcher wanted to know why these individuals identify with a specific ethnic identity. As children of immigrants with a cultural identity, living in America inhibited an American identity as well. Their acknowledged identity helps to see how contextual it is for individuals to present

themselves. It may also help describe a sense of belonging, and, in this sense, it would be a sense in belonging to the United States culture.

Seven individuals interviewed identified as Hmong American, and three identified as Hmong as their ethnic identity (Table 2). Most offered an explanation why they identified as they did while others did not. Participants identified as Hmong American simply because their cultural heritage is Hmong, and they live in the United States.

Table 2

Ethnic identity

Participant	Ethnic Identity
Jake	Hmong American
Mary	Hmong American
Donna	Hmong American
Maddie	Hmong
Cindy	Hmong American
Charles	Hmong
Phil	Hmong American
Larry	Hmong
Oliver	Hmong American
Jane	Hmong American

- How did you or your family manage to survive the Secret War? What survival skills were needed to survive in the jungle?

Asking about the Secret War showed how well informed the participants are about their own history. Although they were not directly in the presence of the Secret War, those who know about the war have demonstrated that their parents have an ingrained learning of the Hmong history, or that they have personally acknowledged their cultural history. Being able to understand the impacts that the Secret War had on their families, participants can understand why and how the Hmong are in America today. Those who

are not knowledgeable regarding this historical event showed that younger generations will continue to lose the facts of the Hmong history.

The Secret War impacted the Hmong population. Immigrating to America, different generations have undergone different experiences. It has especially affected the second-generation in a unique way since they were born in America and have only been surrounded by the western culture. Being able to retain cultural heritage relied solely on what they learned from their parents. Only six of the 10 participants could explain the obstacles during and after the war from what they have remembered their parents telling them, while some expressed that their parents did not share much.

- Does your family emphasize learning Hmong traditions and culture? Why do you think this is?

It is important to gain information based on family emphasis of traditions and culture so the researcher can understand the extent participants are surrounded by their cultural heritage. It also showed how important it is to keep and maintain traditions and culture for each individual and his or her family (see Figure 1). When the Hmong immigrated to the United States in the 1970s, this question allowed the researcher to distinguish patterns of acquiring cultural practices and if interviewees' acknowledged their elders' efforts. All but one of the participants recognized that their family does emphasize learning Hmong traditions and culture. Jane explained that her parents did not practice the Hmong traditions and culture. Maintaining such aspects of heritage is an important aspect of trying to preserve the Hmong culture; however, many also understand that it is difficult especially with the younger generation. Some interviewees showed that sometimes

parents even give in and accept the changes that they see occurring in the younger generations. Though this may be the case for some, most demonstrated that their families try to emphasize learning about Hmong traditions and culture in order to preserve the Hmong identity even down to the younger generations as shown in the data.

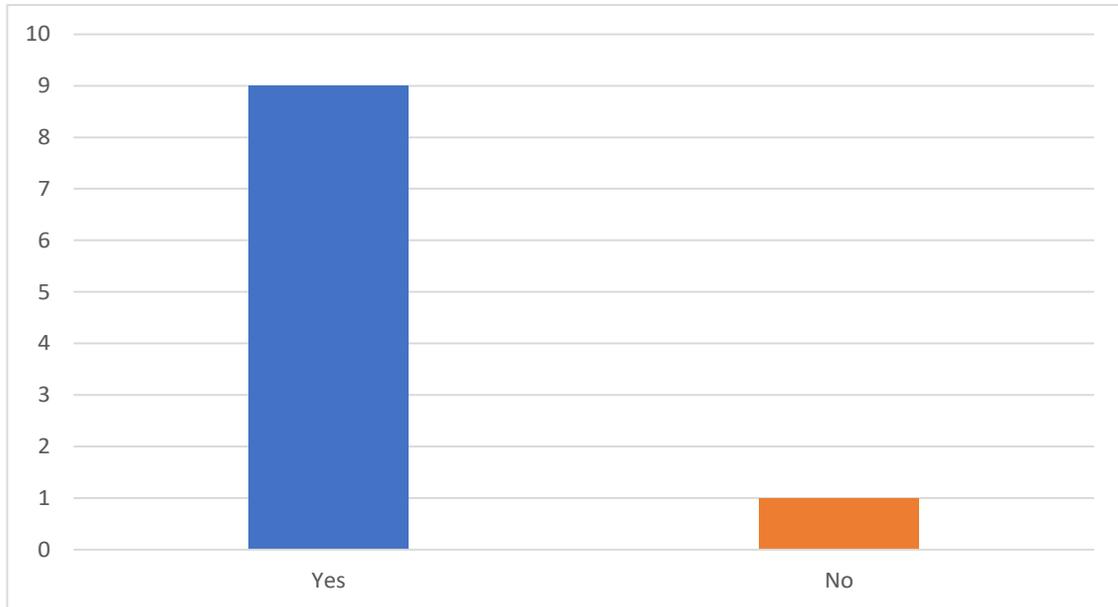


Figure 1. Participants whose family emphasizes learning Hmong traditions and culture.

Racial tensions.

- While growing up, how did you feel about being Hmong?

By asking participants how they feel about being Hmong, it can demonstrate their individual acceptance of their cultural identity. Since the Hmong have not been a well-understood group, this question will document interviewees' experiences of growing up Hmong. The researcher wanted to specifically see how perceptions of others have impacted their individual insights into their own identity, knowing that they were children of immigrants of an ethnic minority group that is not well recognized.

Being able to understand how participants felt about being Hmong helped the researcher recognize second-generation Hmong children of immigrants' perception of identity compared to the mainstream identity. Most felt that growing up Hmong included a lot of misunderstanding from the public and exclusion of American norms since they are not a well-known ethnic population. Others felt that it was unique to be different as the Hmong population is not a highly recognized group. Of the 10 participants, Larry was the only participant who did not compare himself to others or reflect on the Hmong identity as others did.

- Because of the Secret War, how did your family start a life in the United States?

Understanding the impacts of the Secret War helped the researcher learn how the Hmong transitioned to live in America. Participants were able to share the stories they remembered of their families starting a life in the United States and how they managed to survive the war prior to immigrating. Five of the participants did not respond to this question because they lacked the information to give. However, the other five who did provide an answer were able to talk about their families' first encounters in America.

Conflicts between older and younger generations.

- Growing up, what did you learn about gender expectations pertaining to your gender? Because of gender expectations, what are some obstacles that you have faced either in the past or currently?

The Hmong culture entails gender roles with expectations that historically helped maintain a peaceful life overseas. In America, however, the researcher has learned that such expectations within each gender do not compliment the lifestyle here. Because of

this, it is important to ask whether or not participants understand their cultural gender expectations and if they have gone through any obstacles because of them. It assisted the researcher in trying to understand and explain how gender expectations from the Hmong culture and the American culture may or may not be compatible.

These two interview questions complement each other because both deal with the subject of gender expectation and how it affects a participant's identity. The participants' answers revolved around gender stereotypes pertaining to female roles versus male roles. Individuals have undergone obstacles influenced by the impact of gender roles. Males focused on stepping up to taking charge whereas females were expected to be domestic and follow the rules that were imposed on them.

- How have the elders in your culture responded to your decision-making?

Because there are differences in experiences between younger and older generations, this was an important question for the researcher. The researcher asked participants how the elders in their culture have responded to their decision-making to understand better the relationship between younger and older generations. The interviewees' responses were assumed to clarify ways that older generations may react either positively or negatively. This will help the researcher solidify any reasons as to why different generations have a gap in different decisions by understanding how elders in the Hmong culture have responded to the respondents' decision making (see Figure 2).

Participants expressed that they eventually followed their own decision-making, but they also understood that the elders in their culture did not always agree with them. Elders resisted to begin with, and the participants chose to either rebel or wait until their

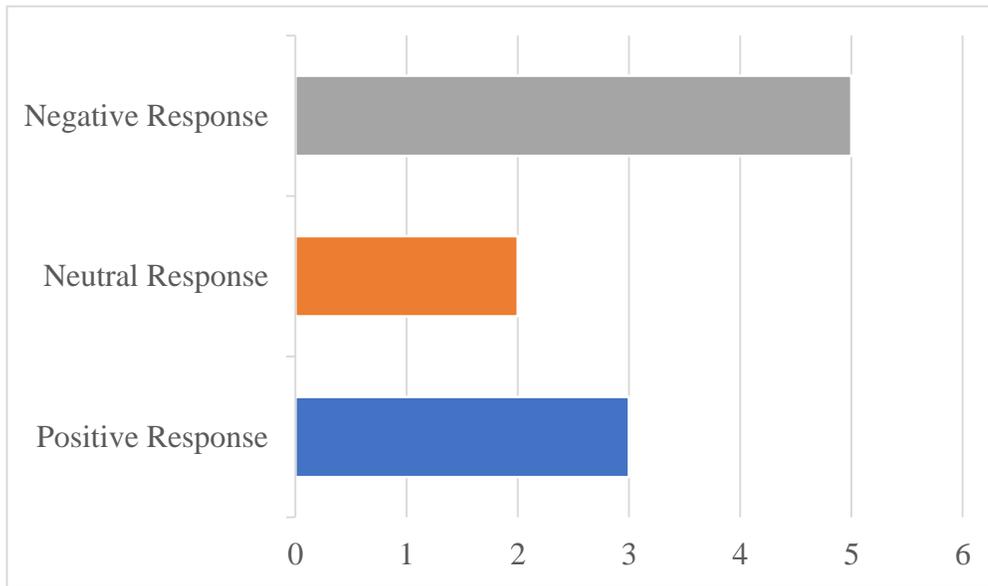


Figure 2. Elders response to participants' decision-making.

parents relented. Only three of the 10 participants stated that their parents were supportive of their decisions. Because older generations are only as exposed to the American culture as they are, they often misunderstand new ideas and why younger generations seek different interests as they grow up in the western culture. Some parents expected their children to become more Americanized because they are now currently living in America, while others continued to restrict certain activities here.

- Are you able to read, write, or speak the Hmong language?

The ability to read, write, and speak the Hmong language shows that participants are still deeply rooted with their cultural language. This question was important for the researcher because, as second-generation children of Hmong immigrants, it is relevant to see whether or not those born in the United States can still speak their cultural language. All the interviewees answered that they could speak the Hmong language, while only

three stated that they knew how to additionally write and speak the Hmong language. The rest claimed that they could both read and write moderately or not at all (see Table 3).

Table 3

Ability to Read, Write, and Speak the Hmong Language

Participant	Read	Write	Speak
Jake	Yes	Some	Yes
Mary	Yes	Yes	Yes
Donna	No	No	Yes
Maddie	Some	Some	Yes
Cindy	No	No	Yes
Charles	Some	Some	Yes
Phil	Some	Some	Yes
Larry	Some	No	Yes
Oliver	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jane	Yes	Yes	Yes

Being American born.

- What traditional values or practices should be reformed? Why?

Because the second-generation children of Hmong immigrants were born in the United States, they have formed opinions on what values and practices should be reformed within the Hmong culture. These opinions are some that do not easily mesh with the American culture and are problematic because younger generations will continue to clash with such practices. While they are exposed to the western culture, they have also experienced the integration of their Hmong culture as well. While trying to blend both cultures, some may have concluded that certain Hmong practices are not compatible with western culture. For these reasons, this question is an important one for evaluating how participants view particular values or practices of their heritage culture.

Of the 10 participants, three did not have opinions as to which values or practices should be reformed. All female participants had an idea of something that should be reformed whereas only one male offered a response. From those who did respond, however, the responses revolved around reforming issues that surround gender expectations and unfairness toward Hmong women. Female responses mostly focused on gender roles while the sole male participant mentioned general traditional rituals such as funeral service.

- How are you doing balancing the Hmong culture and the Western culture?

Explain if one is more important to you than the other.

Being able to know how participants are doing balancing the Hmong culture and the western culture can help explain what things may be guiding the Hmong ethnic group from keeping their cultural heritage. As younger generations are more exposed to western culture, they may or may not find it easier to hold onto their cultural background. This interview question is important because it allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences of the two cultures and to explain if one is more important than the other is. There may be different effects as to why one would be more important than the other would, and that is why it is significant to examine how the participants are balancing the two cultures as shown in Figure 3.

For this question, participants stated that they could balance both the Hmong culture and the western culture; however, there were discussions about how they responded to others within the western culture. Participants stated that they changed their behavior to fit in with those around them when in public, but while at home they also shifted their

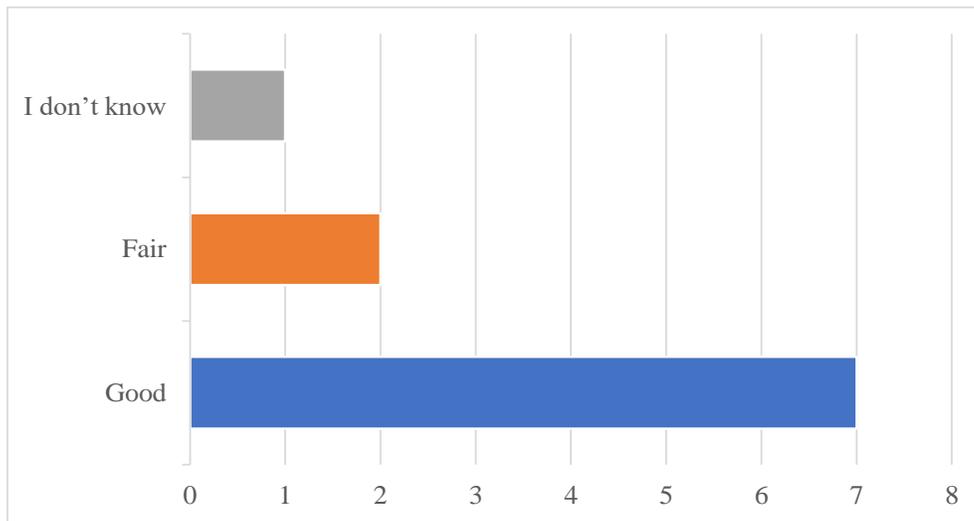


Figure 3. Participants' level of balancing the Hmong culture and western culture.

personality. Though most found some importance in balancing both cultures, blending in with the American culture was important in order not to feel like an outcast.

- What religion does your family practice? How has it impacted your identity?

Table 4 shows the religions practiced by the participants' families. Religious practices today have an impact on the identity that is repressed by the social norms of the American society. Analyzing religious practices that participants have been exposed to can explain how identity is impacted from the participants' experiences. Because many Hmong still practice shamanism, it also helped the researcher to examine the differences in attitudes of that religion with western religions such as Christianity.

Of the 10 participants, seven of them expressed that their family practiced shamanism, while three had families who practiced Christianity. Two of the three who practiced Christianity did not voice how their religion has impacted their identity. Two of the seven who had families that practiced shamanism did express an impact on their

Table 4

Religious Practices

Participant	Religion
Jake	Shamanism
Mary	Shamanism
Donna	Shamanism
Maddie	Shamanism
Cindy	Shamanism
Charles	Christianity
Phil	Shamanism
Larry	Christianity
Oliver	Shamanism
Jane	Christianity

identity. For those who did express how religion impacted their identity, they were asked how it has played a role in shaping their identity into what it is today. Those who had families that practiced shamanism expressed that the religion allowed them to see other religions differently, and that it allowed them to become more spiritual. Jane was the only one who identified as Christian and who explained how it affected her. Other Hmong judged Christians because Christianity is not a recognized religion in the Hmong tradition.

- Do you feel more comfortable reading, writing, or speaking the Hmong language or English language? Why?

Being able to read, write, and speak the Hmong language is rewarding; however, feeling comfortable speaking it determines the natural desire to continue using it. This question is important as part of the interview because it explained the second-generation children of Hmong immigrants comfort level of reading, writing, and speaking the Hmong language and the English language (see Figure 4). It specifically shows their

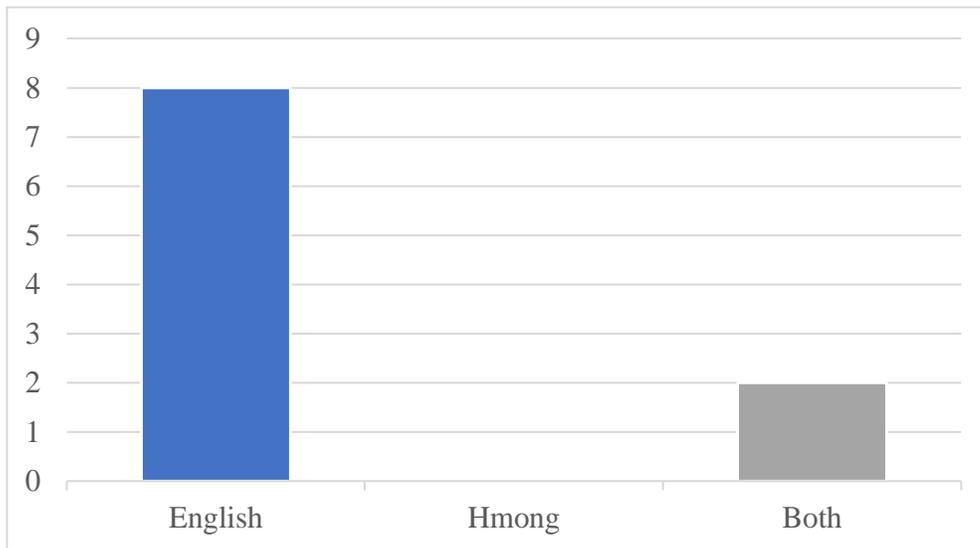


Figure 4. Preference in language usage.

comfort level of being able to either being able to use both, or one over the other. Being born and growing up in the American culture, their preference in language usage can say a lot about how the western norms may have an influence on their fondness. Allowing them to explain their language preferences can help understand their choice as to which is more comfortable for them to use.

Eight of the 10 participants claimed that they felt more comfortable speaking the English language as opposed to the Hmong language; most of their reasoning relied on the fact that they live in a country that dominantly speaks the English language. Being in public, participants explained that they usually spoke the English language since it is the dominant language and easier to attain. Only two claimed that they were fine with either language because they had grown up being exposed to both languages.

- As of today, do you still wish to go back to live in Thailand or Laos, if you had the choice? Why or why not?

The researcher felt that asking participants if they would live in Thailand or Laos would show the participants' openness to the homeland of the elders in their family. Allowing them to explain whether or not they would make this change also permits participants to elaborate on their reasons. This is especially important since it is understood that the lifestyle in the American culture is dissimilar from the lifestyle in Laos and Thailand.

All of the participants stated they would not go back to live in Thailand or Laos; however, they would not mind visiting their parents' homeland. Since they were born in America, they have acquired the norms of the western culture and feel that they would not be able to adapt well to the norms in Southeast Asia. Because of this, they feel that being in Thailand or Laos would make them stand out against the norms of the society there.

- Are younger generations more influenced to lose the Hmong culture and traditions? Why? Provide some examples either pertaining to yourself or someone you know.

The participants are second-generation children of Hmong immigrants. Being from the younger generation of the Hmong population in America, this question is important because it permitted them to reflect about how generations younger than them may lose the Hmong culture and traditions under western influences. Knowing that they are a younger generation, participants echoed the answer to this question by analyzing their own experiences as they grew up within the American culture.

Being the younger generation of Hmong immigrants, eight of the 10 participants definitely believed that younger generations are more likely to lose the Hmong culture and traditions because of the different attractions within the American culture. Some indirectly explained in examples that younger Hmong parents sometimes wanted their children to excel by blending in with the western culture in order to fit in. Larry provided examples of how individuals are influenced by societal norms as the generations get younger. Oliver explained that the Hmong culture is difficult to be drawn back into, but it is slowly being preserved by non-profit organizations.

- How has the idea of whiteness or being an American, changed the cultural preservation or importance of perceptions of the younger generations, and why?

This question is a more reflective one; however, it allowed participants to gather their personal insights. The researcher wanted to capture their individual opinions as to how being an American has impacted the preservation of the Hmong culture for the younger generations. Although it sought to ask participants about their thoughts, it is important because it shows that they are aware of younger generations becoming more exposed to and following western culture.

Seven of the 10 participants stated that the idea of whiteness or being an American has changed the cultural preservation or importance of perceptions of the younger generations. They explained in their individual interviews the ways that it has impacted the preservation of the Hmong culture. Of the 10 participants, Charles and Larry did not provide an answer and instead stated that they have never thought about the issues behind

cultural conservancy. Those who did, however, offered their insights regarding their perceptions.

Chapter 5. Analysis and Discussion

The results with respect to the raw data are evaluated and interpreted in this chapter. The researcher will examine what inferences were drawn from the interviews and explain what the current research found regarding the impact of the American identity and how it is problematic to the Hmong identity. These 10 participants reside in California and are of the second-generation of the Hmong people living in the United States. The results retrieved from the in-depth interviews showed similar patterns across all 10 participants.

Analysis

The current study addressed whether the emergence of the American identity would be problematic to the Hmong identity because of the stigma of whiteness. Through qualitative research, the researcher found a shift in the loss of cultural identity while assimilating into the American identity in relation to the segmented assimilation theory. It was found that through the lack of historical recognition, racial tensions, conflicts between older and younger generations, and being American born, the Hmong identity is affected by the American identity. As revealed from second-generation children of Hmong immigrants, the current study showed that, as the younger generation, they have expressed a shift towards the American identity and culture.

The segmented assimilation theory asserts that the United States is an unequal society and has been stratified in different segments that immigrants have assimilated into. This theory strives to figure out what happens or has happened to children of immigrants after their elders have settled in a new country. Children of immigrants have become more incorporated into the host society to gain equality and access to resources. The current

study demonstrated that second-generation children of Hmong immigrants fell under the segmented assimilation theory's concept of dissonant acculturation. This means that children of immigrants have adapted to the mainstream culture more quickly than their parents. Per Portes and Rumbaut (2001), this acculturation has essentially led to conflicts between the different generations and has become a risk factor in communication.

The current study supports the theory. The themes introduced by the researcher are factors of how second-generation children of Hmong immigrants have adapted to the mainstream culture more quickly than their parents have adapted. The impact of the American identity has transformed their cultural identity to clash with another identity. Lack of historical recognition of their cultural background has influenced their failure to understand who the Hmong people are. Although older generations have tried to preserve the culture as much as they can, younger generations are continuously learning more about the western culture. Because of racial tensions of growing up being different from the face of America, participants showed that, by trying to fit in, they could close that gap. While trying to fit in, younger generations will continue to lose their cultural identity. Spending more of their time trying to fit into the popular culture will increase tension and disagreements between older and younger generations. Since the second-generation are American born, they have struggled to incorporate thoroughly all the culture and traditions of the Hmong heritage. It has been made difficult to preserve their Hmong identity since they have been so accustomed to the American identity.

This assimilation process is also presented in the melting pot theory that metaphorically envisions America as a promised land; however, immigrants would

essentially lose their cultural backgrounds in order to assimilate into the American identity. Equated with Americanization, the American identity has transformed the Hmong identity. The researcher did not deal with any racial tensions that participants had with other culture or ethnic groups. Most of their responses and reactions expressed that the Hmong ethnic group resisted against the white identity taking over since it is the dominant race that ran the Secret War in Laos. The current research revealed that immigrants either could keep their cultural identity or choose to assimilate since the characteristics of whiteness has fashioned the construction of the society that they are in. Assimilating into what society has constructed helps with blending in to be like others, whereas keeping cultural identity maintains differences.

As stated, exploration of second-generation Hmong individuals and their perceptions of the American identity are presented in this study. The interviews collected were based on 10 men and women in the state of California. The challenge was being able to get a sample population that fairly represented all second-generation Hmong children of immigrants without bias. This is a limitation because California is only one state within the United States, and only 10 individuals' responses were made in this study.

Another limitation was time and travel expenses. These interviews were conducted using snowball sampling, which could have created biased responses since participants nominated other individuals they knew well as possible participants for this study. There was always a high chance that participants might share the same traits because of this. However, in this case, participants had to participate willingly in this study and understood that every question was voluntary.

The author found that immigration to the United States has influenced the loss of the Hmong cultural identity as they assimilate into the American identity. From the in-depth interviews conducted of the 10 individuals, the researcher found four main thematic patterns. These themes helped to explain how the emergence of the American identity has made it difficult for the Hmong identity to remain intact. The themes that helped to explain the effects of the emerging American identity included lack of historical recognition, racial tensions, conflicts between older and younger generations, and being American born.

Lack of historical recognition. Being second-generation immigrants, the interviews showed that interviewees did not grow up absorbing the historical context of the Hmong population. Lacking knowledge of the history of the Hmong people can also play a role in why younger generations will and can lose their Hmong identity in America. Being born in the United States, most participants identified as Hmong American with the reasoning that both their parents are Hmong. Those who identified as just Hmong did not offer an explanation as to why they identified with that ethnic group. This showed that, as the younger generation, they lack the knowledge and awareness of who the Hmong people are and what serves to identify Hmong as an ethnic group. The segmented assimilation theory describes second-generation immigrants based on their experiences and have additionally shown that they can more easily adjust to life in the country. As children of immigrants, this group is usually able to integrate into the host society. However, because of this, they can also lose the drive of keeping up with their parents'

cultural heritage. Basic understanding of self-identity is absent as displayed in the following interview responses. Jake stated in his explanation,

I identify as Hmong American, just because like, I am Hmong but then I don't know, like um, everything there is to know about the culture and everything, and I was born in America so that is the only reason why.

Mary explained her ethnic identity,

I identify myself as Hmong American and that is because I'm Hmong and also because I was born in the United States. So, I'm "Hmoob Meekas" like they say, Hmong American.

Donna further added on to this same idea,

I identify as Hmong American because I am Hmong so are my parents and I'm born in the US so that is why I consider myself as Hmong American.

Cindy explained,

I identify as Hmong American because I am Hmong and I do believe that being here I do serve my identity as an American.

Phil stated,

I see myself as Hmong American because I live in America but then at the same time the Hmong within me comes before American.

Jane stated that,

Both my parents are Hmong and I was born in America so I identify myself as Hmong American.

The three individuals who identified as Hmong were Maddie, Charles, and Larry.

Maddie and Charles did not give an explanation, however Larry stated,

I am Hmong because that's who my parents were and that's who I am.

Identity was not the only entity that lacked consciousness. When the researcher asked participants about how their family managed to survive the Secret War, it was a question

posed to understand how much context they knew of the war since it was such a significant portion of the Hmong history. From the interviews, it showed that the interviewees did not know an abundant amount of information regarding the obstacles their families had gone through during the time of the war. Four of the participants had never talked to their parents about the war, while the other six only heard brief stories of how their parents had to retain resources and avoid communist groups from Vietnam. From those six, they still did not know a great amount of detail about the war in terms of how traumatic the experience was for the older generations who survived it. Aside from the general experiences of being in the war, participants had little education regarding how the Secret War was historically formed.

With America as the host society, it influences different outcomes among different generations. The goal of trying to be an American takes away that motivation to learn about their own background, and, instead, it pushes them to move forward with the host culture. Moving more into the host culture is also an issue that arises from the idea that American public schools are not diversifying their history curriculum that continues to influence students to only study given objectives by their schools. The consequences of this, however, cause children of immigrants to find it more difficult to grasp onto their family's historical background and failure to recognize their own ethnic community. Because the segmented assimilation theory identifies the American society as one that is divided by the upper-class and the underclass, immigrant children are divided as a whole to see social inequality. This perspective pushes them to find little interest in tracing their own roots when they can see obvious and different social resources that they strive to

acquire. The interviewees show that there is little interest and knowledge of the Hmong historical background and basic understanding of what led this ethnic group to immigrate to the United States. Mary explained her family's journey,

I remember hearing stories from my grandparents and my parents about the Secret War. I know that a lot of them have mentioned that during the day time, it was not a good idea to set up a camp fire because that would attract the communist from knowing where you're located at, and they'll come towards you. Baby's, kids were told to be quiet, babies couldn't even cry out loud or else that would attract the communist. A lot of them went to abandoned villages and found left over food or brought back whatever food they could find there. While yams, roots and edible leaves that my parents or grandparents knew that were okay to eat, they ate a lot of that to survive the war. And crossing the Mekong river was just a struggle for a lot of the Hmong people since a lot of them died along the way because no one knew how to swim, but my parents and family made it.

Cindy tried to remember the stories that she was told,

My mom said the only survival skills they had was just to run. That, and cook, I don't remember much except for a couple stories that my mom told me, that they had to sleep in trees and everything. I don't know if that's a skill. But my dad, he actually fought in the war, he was 12 when he actually fought in the war and I think that's all I remember.

Larry never talked much about this subject with his parents as he stated,

I don't know. I never really talk to my parents about that. But in time to time I'll hear my parents talk about how they needed to keep the kids quiet and they would feed them a little bit of opium or alcohol to sedate them

Oliver explained,

My parents have been very reserved on telling us about their grueling life surviving the war but overall, they survived by escaping the communist Laos party early and becoming refugees in Thailand.

Not knowing the key consequences that pushed the Hmong people to immigrate to the United States shows a gap in the understanding the context of the Secret War. As the second-generation children of Hmong immigrants are considered one of the younger

generations in the United States at this time, participants showed that they have failed to acknowledge how the Secret War played a huge role in the loss of historical and identity structure. In addition, participants also talked about how their parents and families emphasized learning Hmong traditions and culture to preserve better the Hmong identity.

In their statements, interviewees expressed that the older generations wanted to impose learning of the Hmong traditions and culture because it was significant to them. Participants articulated that this significance was shown as a method of helping the younger generation understand the importance of traditions and cultures from the elders in their family. From this inference, it can be concluded that the older generations are seeing an obvious shift in the younger generations. To be able to preserve their identity, they have strived to pass on values to the younger generation in competition with the American society that they now must battle. We can see that from the second generation, there are clear changes in that the first generation struggled to fit in a new world, while the second generation continues their fight to fit in.

In this study, second-generation immigrants had a harder time relating to stronger family ties, which has to do with a segmented assimilation leading to different experiences when compared to the older generations who were born in a different country other than the new host country. Being at a higher risk of acculturating into a culture opposite from their traditional values, the segmented assimilation theory states that the immigrant community will try to teach their children to avoid losing access to social and cultural resources so that younger generations will not lose their culture of origin (Portes & Zhou, 1993). In this research, Hmong elders and parents specifically tried to reinforce

more Hmong behavior norms so that younger generations would be able to inherit and pass along the identity of the Hmong ethnic group to their children. If this was not done, the elders feared having an identity that will continue to slip away from being known, as it is already not a well-known group. Jake explained how the elders in his family try to emphasize learning the Hmong culture and traditions,

My family do but its more my grandparents that emphasize it. My parents are more lenient and they don't really force it on us but my grandparents they, I wouldn't say they force it on you but they want you to learn it because they want to preserve it.

Mary noted,

Yes, my family still emphasize learning about the Hmong culture and traditions because that's something they don't want my siblings and I to lose while we are integrating into the western culture and stuff.

Cindy talked about how her parents see that the younger generation is losing Hmong traditions and cultures,

My dad and my mom, they are very traditional. And they push for it too because they realize that not a lot of us actually understand why we practice our religion so they want to push for that.

Phil understood his family's importance of emphasizing tradition and culture,

Yes, my family we do try to teach the younger generations Hmong tradition and culture as we believe that it is important for us to pass down our tradition and culture.

Larry expressed why his mother emphasizes learning the Hmong culture,

My mom emphasizes a lot, she thinks that as a Hmong person we should learn our traditional values even though we are efficient. My mom still encourages us to go to funerals that are non-Christian.

Oliver added,

My parents were extremely traditional but they did not impose their beliefs on us. We were given the choice to follow the traditions as we see fit.

When analyzing participants' level of knowledge of the Hmong history, it could be argued that because of the emergence of the American identity, younger generations will continue to lose their Hmong identity. Lack of historical recognition will influence the loss of cultural identity while assimilating into the American identity. Participants from the study recognized that the elders in their culture see the loss of cultural preservation in the younger generations. Because the Secret War is not included in American public school education, we can conclude that it will be easier for the older Hmong generations to maintain their cultural traditions. There is also the issue of a visible gap between schools and the historical content of a multicultural curriculum for many students of color since the contextual academics surrounding history is selective.

Racial tensions. The results showed that while growing up, participants had undergone the experiences of feeling different and isolated because of their Hmong identity. They recognized that they were different and often labeled with Asian stereotypes by other ethnic groups. The feeling of shame generally rose because of the consequences of being discriminated by others in the American dominated realm. It was made difficult to grow up being Hmong, as these second-generation individuals had shown that around their peers they also wished that they could easily fit in with the majority.

In terms of the majority, blending in with whiteness is being able to fit in with the mainstream. It is seen this way because it is the dominant face of the American culture that is seen as social privilege. When looking back to America's history of slavery, whiteness is documented as a race that is considered superior to all others who are non-

white. This foundation of whiteness has historically been known as the foundation race of the United States, and the contribution of racism has been established through slavery, immigration, and labor laws (Roediger, 1999). Because of this concept of whiteness and the privilege that it comes with, it may cause minority figures to be more alike with the majority in order to fit in and escape racial tensions.

In the segmented assimilation theory, race is socially constructed where groups were considered racially distinct upon arrival to the United States (Alba & Nee, 2003). The difficulty in being Hmong was the fact that they are a group who did not immigrate to fulfill what other immigrants saw as the “American dream.” Having been driven out of the regions of Southeast Asia and undergone the horrific events of the Secret War, the Hmong have consequently been pushed out of their comfort zone when America became their new home. The betrayal from the war and treacherous actions of using the Hmong as an economical resource during the war benefitted the United States’ agenda of stopping the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.

Because of the war created by the United States, the older generations of the Hmong ethnic group despised the American identity and culture taking over their younger generations’ lives. Since the United States caused a large amount of the Hmong population to lose their lives in the Secret War, Hmong elders especially feel that Americans have and will continue to be ignorant and unappreciative of the sacrifices that Hmong troops and families suffered during and after the war. Today, it is still seen as an issue because many Americans still do not know who the Hmong people are and what they have contributed during the Indochina wars alongside the United States. While

younger generations continue to grow up in this country that is now the new home for the Hmong ethnic group, they are often mistaken for others within the larger population of Asians. The broader umbrella term “Asian” is often filled with stereotypes that continue to assume all Asian groups are the same. Participants from the current study discussed their experiences of being discriminated against because of their Asiatic background and how they were often treated with ignorant perceptions from others. This essentially created an idea that it would be more simple to be alike with those in the American dominated culture. They explained that it was not until years later that they became more open to appreciate the diversity of their Hmong background.

Mary talked about her transition of understanding her Hmong identity,

Growing up, I was pretty content about being Hmong, there were times when I would feel pretty embarrassed around my non-Hmong friends just because of the stereotypes that would get thrown around how we Asian people, we sacrifice weird things, eat weird things, dogs, cats and all those stuff but I grew out of that once I got out of high school, and once I got into college I was more open minded about those things and I became more proud of Hmong.

Donna explained the different phases that she went through,

Growing up I think I went through phases about how I felt about being Hmong. When I was young I didn't know that I was Hmong or that I was labeled as a certain type of ethnicity, so didn't know I was Hmong. But as I grew up I guess, I saw that I was different so that's when I started to understand myself as a Hmong and I mean, as I was, maybe in my early teenage years, I would say that I didn't really embrace that much because as a teenage I didn't want to be different, I wanted to be normal or the same as other people but then as I aged, when I got into college is when I really started to embrace my diversity as a Hmong and that was when I was proud to be different, and I think that's where I stand now.

Maddie stated how being Hmong is different,

I think being Hmong is something different. People really don't know who we are. As a kid, I wanted to be a different race because you're different from others and you are kind of singled out.

Charles talked about the difficulty of growing up Hmong,

Growing up was pretty hard being Hmong because of the racism that we went through but it actually helped me fight through life and overcoming obstacles. So now I feel more confident being Hmong and being who I am.

Oliver further mentioned the conflict between the American identity and Hmong identity,

Growing up being Hmong was rough considering the fact I was a second generation living in a white dominated town. Although I persevered in education, I was teased by both my kind and other racial groups because being smart made me seem too American and being Hmong made me seem like a geeky foreigner. I felt the color of my skin and my language degraded me to be similar to the rest of my fellow Hmong peers but my strive in education made my fellow Hmong classmates consider me a "white washed" Hmong. Meaning I was someone who wanted to be American rather than Hmong.

Jane discussed her shame in being Hmong,

There were times, growing up, when I wished I wasn't Hmong because I desired to look and live a certain way. Now, I have come to love and appreciate my race. I love how family oriented we are. I appreciate my parents so much more.

Because the Hmong population helped the United States Central Intelligence Agency in the Secret War, their families were granted the opportunity to immigrate to the United States. Though it is often seen as an advantage to immigrate to the United States, interviewees recounted stories of their parents cramped in small apartments relying on governmental services. Not having enough resources, families were often placed on welfare for many years to help them take care of everyone in the household. Other families had to let go of their religious beliefs because of sponsorship from churches here in America that offered help to them. Having little resources, they participated in religious activities because it helped them live and participate in a new culture. Children often grew up with few materialistic things and struggled to keep up with life in America. Mary explained about her family's experiences,

It was hard. I remember my parents telling us how we had to live in a cramped small apartment. My parents would walk to the stores to go buy my brother and I milk because they didn't have a car. We were on welfare for a lot of years because my dad was the only one that was working to provide for the family while my mom stayed at home to look after the kids. So, it was really rough for my parents at the beginning but now that some of my siblings are grown up and moved out, were able to go to work and help my family with any financial problems.

Phil explained how his parents came to the United States,

Because of the war my parents, at first, they had to let go of their religious beliefs and their traditions because they were brought here by Mormon sponsors. So their first few years here they were full fledged Mormons, they went to, I don't know if they went to church or not but they were full fledged Mormons. They went to every event their church hosted and participated in everything their church actually had.

Oliver shared his family's first encounters in America,

My parents were sponsored by my uncles who came over initially after the American troops pulled out of Laos and Vietnam. When my parents arrived in the United States, they sought help from government aid services such as welfare and disability for my dad due to his failing eyes due to fighting in the war. My siblings and I grew up with very few clothes and just enough to eat to survive but we were happy and appreciated each other more thanks to the struggle we endured.

Having experienced this, Hmong immigrants have been influenced by the American culture's dominant society that made it difficult for adjustment. Living in America with little to no education and experience, the Hmong population has been socially controlled to either stick with their old habits or join in with new norms. It can be argued that because of this, participants wanted to fit in to avoid being different from the rest of their peers. Because of racial tensions from being different from the American culture, younger generations have increasingly moved away from the Hmong culture and traditions. As their ability to fit in grows, it will also cause the Hmong identity to slowly lose its uniqueness. Due to racial tensions, it could be concluded that younger generations

will seek to bridge the gap of their differences with the American culture so they will not undergo more stress of being an outsider.

Conflicts between older and younger generations. Between the older and younger generations, participants showed that there was an obvious gap of understanding. This misunderstanding has been shown to rise between different generations because of the clash between two dissimilar cultures. The experiences of growing up in America have changed their roles and values compared to older generations. The interviews have shown that the biggest impact on second-generation immigrants is the gender roles and cultural expectations that often compete against the conflicted customs of the American lifestyle. Growing up, participants felt that these roles either bound them or separated them from their elders with no middle ground.

In the segmented assimilation theory of dissonant acculturation, adolescents tend to assimilate more into the surrounding environment and may lose sight of the ethnic community. This type of acculturation creates conflict between generations and becomes a risky factor for second-generation immigrants. The relationship between parent and child will diminish the ability to communicate by language and by cultural norms because of this. From recent research, participants have found that Hmong cultural gender roles are not compatible with the American lifestyle. Jake explained what he understood as his role,

As a male in a Hmong family you're expected to succeed pretty much. Like they want you to be someone big, someone great. Um, your family wants you to go to college, graduate with a doctorate, or masters, or bachelors.

Mary talked about her experiences taking on the role as the oldest daughter,

I think it was a lot harder on girls, we're expected to stay home, do chores, cook, be a good daughter, don't do bad things. Whereas the guys, my brothers they could do pretty much whatever they want, they can stay out late, they can go off to a different town for a few days and come back home. But um, it was hard, but I think I'm seeing that its slowly changing, but we'll see.

Donna stated,

Well there's definitely gender roles. There's different expectations as a female or male, as a female I am viewed less important as male I would say. The males had authority and then as a female I, my expectation is just to be a good girl, not cause trouble, get married, have kids, and nothing much.

Maddie also added,

As a Hmong daughter, you're expected to do house chores. You can't really do anything that would be considered sinning or anything like that.

Cindy further added onto the same idea,

Well, being Hmong as my role, the ladies are supposed to cook and clean and listen and not go out. Can't dye your hair, do this and that.

Growing up male, Charles talked about how he is expected to step up to his responsibilities,

For the Hmong culture, it was pretty tough being a male because parents expect more from the male than female.

Larry learned of gender expectations in simple terms as he explained,

My parents were always like "boys should be boys and girls should be girls" boys shouldn't date boys and girls shouldn't date girls. That's the rules.

Oliver shared his experiences of how he learned gender roles by stating that,

My parents educated us on the norm with gender roles in our culture, however, we were taught to respect each other equally and learned to commit to both roles rather than being segregated between male and female roles. For instance, women are expected to clean and cook for the men, however, my parents taught us to understand that every individual should learn to cook and clean regardless of our gender. They taught us to respect the opposite gender and to become independent.

Jane talked about what she learned about gender expectations and how it has not affected her negatively,

When it comes to gender expectations, I've always been taught that I must learn how to cook and maintain a good household. Although education is important, a woman should learn how to be a good daughter and daughter in law. Being a good daughter/daughter in law would be knowing how to cook, clean, and providing good hospitality.

It is desired and expected that a Hmong son is successful. This definition of success can be explained by the ability to provide for the family and carry on cultural traditions. Men are given more opportunities in education because they will always benefit their family. They will learn the "Hmong way" of performing tradition through rituals within their clans and honor their relatives correctly. A man reflects the reputation of his father in a measure of how well he can manage his success and marriage. When it comes to situations of conflict, men have the main responsibility of making decisions for the family. To have a son is to gain respect from the Hmong community since they are seen as strength and shelter (Symonds, 2004). With this demand, it is seen as a pressure of being able to do well in order to be the man of the household. Although this was expressed by male interviewees as some of the difficulties within their gender roles, sons are more culturally valued and are given the opportunity to explore hobbies.

Because of gender expectations, male participants have expressed some of the obstacles they have faced. They expressed that there is the burden of being stuck between family expectations and personal goals that can cause confusion for the self. Being stuck in this decision-making has caused them to choose between making their family happy, or pursuing something to make themselves happy. The idea of being able to step into

manhood and provide for the family can be quite an impediment. It became a source of their weakness because they often wanted to steer their own life instead of listening to requests from their elders. According to male participants, being a son is more difficult than being a daughter because males have the responsibilities of stepping up to take care of family, wife, and kids. Being pressured to carry on religious beliefs and traditions is seemingly a harder task for second-generation immigrants because they were born to understand a different culture in the United States.

For daughters, however, it was recognized that they are expected to grow domestically and learn the chores of cooking and cleaning. Hmong women contribute largely to the representations of a daughter, a daughter-in law, and a wife (Lo, 2001). A daughter is special, but she will eventually leave her family to live with her husband's family one day. She is expected to listen and respect her family as she learns the work and responsibilities of her mother. The interviews showed that there was no room for extracurricular activities. The female participants expressed that they must be a good daughter in order to fulfill the future representations of a daughter-in-law and wife; she must learn to get up early, prepare meals, take care of children, and do household chores for the home. The definition of this idea of being a good daughter can be explained by how well they perform domestic work. Some of their accounts further specified that girls are expected to get married and have kids, showing that there is nothing much to look forward to.

In America, education is seen as an important way to gain knowledge. Because the Hmong did not often have access to education in their old country, household

expectations always came first (Long, 2008). Restrictions were placed on physical appearance because girls should be as simple and conservative as they can be.

Participants felt that, as girls, they needed to be obedient and expressed that they are viewed as less important compared to the sons in the home. Because of these gender expectations, female participants talked about the obstacles they have faced through the limited options that they had. The biggest obstacle is the lack of freedom and involvement in extracurricular activities. Wanting to play sports revealed a masculine feature and was looked down upon. Another obstacle expressed was getting around curfew restrictions because staying out too late was wrong for a girl to do even if it were for education purposes: parents will always question their daughters when they are out of the home more than their sons are. For girls, being stuck at home and keeping the home clean was deemed as the role of a good daughter.

Though male and female participants explained having undergone different gender expectations and limitations here in the United States, the second-generation interviewees demonstrated that there is resistance against these expectations. While growing up into new customs of the western culture, elders with their cultural background have tried to incorporate some of the norms to keep the continuation of traditions. Though older generations try to keep some of the Hmong customs, younger generations have begun to recognize that those customs will eventually become harder to follow. These different viewpoints also widen the gap between generations by creating conflict among older and younger generations especially because of gender roles.

Between gender roles and cultural expectations, elders in the Hmong community have responded to participants' decision-making based on this gap. Because there is a shift from generation to generation, younger Hmong continue to be more surrounded by the western culture as the elders try to keep and preserve the Hmong culture. Participants expressed that there have been disagreements and agreements; however, the agreements did not come easily. From the interviews, participants either showed that their elders either supported them or eventually had to go with participant's decision-making. Accepting current or new ideas and routines was hard for some parents since they have been so accustomed to the same ideas for so long.

Interviewees expressed that the elders in their culture were stricter toward their decisions when they were younger; however, the older they got, the more lenient their parents became. Stubbornness from parents created many disagreements and rebellious acts by children in order to receive consent. Interviewees showed that their parents often did not agree with children moving far away for college because staying local would be more beneficial for the family as a whole. When living closer to the family, parents believe that their children can more easily help as the elders begin to age. Because of these barriers, most of the participants stated that, although many of the responses they got from their elders were negative, they continuously fought to make their own decisions. For the male participants, disagreements usually ended in agreements; female participants had to fight continuously in order to receive some sort of understanding or consent. Donna discussed the resistance with her parents,

They responded with stubbornness I would have to say. It takes a lot of fighting against them, and rebellion to get their consent. There is some support, I feel like I get a lot of support and encouragement from my mother more than from my father.

Maddie stated that she did what she wanted,

Not really positive but then they can't really do anything because it's my decision so they just have to go with it.

Cindy also discussed a similar viewpoint,

They kind of just go with it but other than that, that's it.

Charles stated,

It was pretty hard. They're pretty strict on stuff. What I'm doing and based on my decision making. Elders have been pretty tough on me.

Larry explained,

Some have not agreed with me so much in terms of...since I'm living out here in the bay area, they think it's too expensive. They have actually tried to persuade me to move out of the bay area and go out of state to find a job. They think that would be better not just for my but for my family. But I feel like I can't follow their decisions because that's not me that's not my life, it's not what I think is best for me.

Oliver talked about the impact of being the youngest son,

My parents were against my decision to go out of town for college, especially since I'm the youngest son, they expected me to stay local and prepare to take care of them as they get older. Nonetheless, they knew my future would be better if I followed my goals and dreams, therefore, they eventually accepted my decisions to move away for college and in retrospect, they now accept the American culture more than ever thanks to the success they've seen in me.

The battle between keeping younger generations on the same track as older generations has shifted as shown in the interviews. The participants indicated that being born in the United States has caused goals to shift from agricultural work to pursuing higher education and hobbies outside of Hmong culture and gender roles. Parents and

elders have resisted, but they also have realized that the demands of living in this new world stress a different kind of lifestyle. Even with disagreements, many of the participants expressed that they still follow their own paths regardless of the resistance they face from their elders. Though younger generations acculturate quicker than the older generations, the Hmong ethnic group has demonstrated that the American identity is slowly merging into their identity through those who continue to be born in the United States.

Continuing along this thread, the researcher also found that there were barriers of communication between the older and younger generation. The current study found that all participants were able to speak the Hmong language. In terms of being able to read the Hmong language, four answered they were able to, four answered being able to read some, while two said they are not able to read the language at all. In terms of being able to write in the Hmong language, three explained they were able to, four could write some, and three could not write the language at all.

Being able to understand and comprehend the language is said to be a sign of also understanding who the Hmong people are and their deeply rooted history. Most felt that knowing their cultural language is important because they see that those who are younger than they are have trouble understanding the elders in their culture. A barrier that is preventing younger generations from learning the Hmong language could be their high exposure to the American culture. The pattern of needing to use the English language more requires more of their time to learn it instead of the Hmong language. Participants

also stated that they find it difficult to learn to proficiently read, write, and speak the Hmong language. Donna shared,

I am able to speak Hmong and not really, I don't know how to write it or read it. There's definitely a lot of barriers to maintaining the Hmong language. I think that this has to do with the American education system which is all in English and we start that when we were five. So that's when you start losing your native tongue, and English is basically, you use it mostly throughout your daily lives, so you lose a lot of your Hmong language.

Cindy stated,

Actually, I only know how to speak it. It's really hard for me to learn how to write it just because I don't know the punctuations are really hard for me. I can barely read.

Larry further stated,

I'm able to only speak in Hmong. Read a little bit, not write. I think it's very important to know how to read and write but then I was never taught at a young age, I guess I shouldn't let that stop me. I myself should be more proactive and go learn how to read and write in Hmong.

Jane explained her proficiency in the Hmong language,

I can read, write and speak Hmong fluently. I believe that the Hmong language is very important to our culture. It makes us who we are. It is our way of conversing but it is hard for me to continue to speak and learn the language because many of my friends are not able to read, write or speak the language. It is hard to find young Hmong individuals who still speak Hmong.

Participants expressed the importance of knowing their cultural language because it plays a role in defining who the Hmong people are. They realized that several other young Hmong individuals can no longer speak the Hmong language, and, without it, the culture will slowly disappear if no one can communicate with the Hmong language.

Interviewees expressed an understanding that being able to use the language is beneficial to keeping a relationship with the Hmong community and elders.

Knowing this importance, they also voiced the barriers that have stopped them from learning more of the Hmong culture. It was explained that, in America, the education system is all in English and has influenced younger generations to use that language from the start of age five. Conversing with other Hmong individuals continues to be difficult. Even if one could speak the language, it would not be guaranteed that other second-generation or even younger generations of Hmong individuals would be able to comprehend the same language. This affects the loss of their native tongue because they continue to use English more than the Hmong language. Dealing with reading and writing, some have expressed wanting to learn Hmong calligraphy; however, because they were not taught at a young age, they feel it is less practical to learn now. Because the English language is a significant part of their lives as they continue to use it around their peers, it has also taken over their native tongue. This will continue to increase the language barrier between older and future younger generations of the Hmong ethnic group.

We can argue that from the results of the interviews, the conflicts between older and younger generations has widened the gap between each generation, which can influence the loss of Hmong cultural identity as younger generations assimilate into the American identity and western culture norms. Participants have also grown to resist cultural gender roles because of the influence from the American culture that surrounds them. The obstacles that they have undergone because of gender roles and expectations have showed that they have resisted older generations in order to pursue their own identity in this country. Findings about the disagreements and negative responses regarding the

participants' decision-making have helped explain why the younger generations are drifting away from the older generation and their traditions. This separates the different generations especially in terms of language attainment. Interviewees had expressed that the barriers of keeping the Hmong language intact was a result of the American identity taking over their everyday lives with the new English language.

Being American born. The Hmong ethnic group immigrated to America and has been separated by different generations. It has been difficult for them to continue with their cultural and traditional practices in the United States. With different experiences in each generation, second-generation immigrants have shown that, by being American born, it has influenced their identity. Because they have not experienced the Hmong culture in the same ways that the first- and 1.5- generations of immigrants have, they are affected in ways that make it harder for them to accept certain traditions and more difficult to understand and appreciate the importance of their identity.

Being so familiar with the American culture, the interviews illustrated that participants felt some traditional values and practices should be reformed. Female participants stated that issues revolving around sexist perspectives and attitudes toward Hmong women should be reformed, while male participants addressed similar thoughts. Though male participants talked about similar ideas, they were not as open as the female participants were in terms of giving details. Being American born, female participants expressed that women are more affected by cultural expectations.

Living in the United States, they felt that gender equality should be more welcomed and that Hmong women should be able to do what Hmong men do. Women are oppressed

in general, but for the Hmong population, women were still bottled up in the home with less freedom compared to their male counterparts. The responsibility of being a daughter, daughter-in-law, and a wife has made it difficult for Hmong women to be free because of the extended consequences of negative judgments. Women are already viewed with strong traditional gender expectations. Those who are divorced are viewed with even more biased judgments that have degraded their value. Because of such expectations, it has been difficult for Hmong women to balance different identities when they try to pursue education or employment (Julian, 2004).

Another area that participants suggested should be reformed was the concept of choosing a bride. Traditionally, it was acceptable for a man to physically take any woman he wanted to marry and keep as his wife. That is what life was like in Southeast Asia. Gender roles helped build families to maintain a functional lifestyle. In the United States, this concept is considered criminal and is against the law. This shows that the lifestyle within the American culture requires different skills and customs that would not be compatible with such traditional roles that were expected of Hmong women. Because of this, female participants have a push-pull relationship with their Hmong background. Though they struggle to balance different expectations, they still have to continue to build their lives in this American culture.

Aside from traditions that participants thought needed to be reformed, growing up in America has made it difficult to balance two different cultures. Growing up was undeniably a challenge for the participants in this regard. As children, they were accustomed to what their parents taught them, but once enrolled in school; they were also

introduced to a different routine. Some have expressed feeling that one culture was constantly trying to dominate the other. It was important for them to be able to blend in with non-Hmong peers and their norms to avoid being the outcast. Mary talked about how both cultures are important to her,

I think both is as important to me. Balancing the Hmong culture and the Western culture has been a struggle since I was a kid. While you're at home you're told to go to school, sit, be quiet, listen to the teacher, pay attention, come home, do homework, repeat. But while you're at school they want you to be more outspoken, ask questions, and um it was hard because I became shy, I didn't want to do all of that until I got into college. It was a lot easier for me to do that then.

For Cindy, she talked about how she felt growing up trying to balance both cultures,

To be honest, growing up I feel like what was more important was blending with Caucasians with their traditional forms. But then now I feel like it's more important to hold onto my own heritage. Just the fact that learning about how a lot of our younger generations now are not understanding our ways and where we come from or were losing a lot of our language, so I feel that's more important for me.

Charles further stated,

I think I'm doing okay with both, the Hmong culture and the Western culture. I think they're both equally important to me because I use the Hmong language at home with my parents, almost every day and then at school I use the English language to communicate with people.

Phil talked about how he switched his identity in different environments to fit in,

Honestly both of them are both equally important to me cause its not like I'm leaving, even though I'm living in America, I'm still Hmong inside. I'm Hmong but then at the same time I'm living in America. I'm having two worlds cross paths. At the same time, I balance both of them through my environment. Because if I was at home with my parents, I'll probably work with them but talk a lot more in Hmong. But if I was at school and in public where there's a lot of folks talking in English that's when I change myself or my personality to fit according to my environment that I'm in.

Jane stated her appreciation for both cultures,

I think I balance my Hmong and Western culture quite evenly. I do not think one culture is more important than the other to me. I appreciate my Hmong culture but I also appreciate the Western culture just as much.

All the participants have tried to appreciate both cultures. They understood that being born in the United States did not mean that they would not be expected to carry on their Hmong identity. The responses in the current study showed that participants acted a certain way to please their parents within the household but also changed their personality when in the outside world in order to fit into the environment. Participants' behavior in public and in private was influenced by whom they were around. This constant shift in attitude and personality showed the exposure of two very different cultures that will not easily blend.

Furthermore, the results have revealed that younger generations are more comfortable reading, writing, and speaking the English language compared to the Hmong language. Their reasons stated that even when trying to preserve both languages, the use of the English language is daily and, as a result, has become easier than the Hmong language. Most people they interact with primarily speak the English language, and the need to use the Hmong language has gradually decreased among the younger generation. Because participants are more comfortable speaking the English language, they stated that they only speak the Hmong language in the home at their parents request because of comprehension barriers. Interviewees addressed the difficulty in trying to learn the structure of the Hmong language properly compared to the English language since they have not consistently needed to use the Hmong language. Jake shared his preference in language usage,

I would say English language because I use it every day. For the Hmong, I speak it here and there but I don't really write Hmong every day or read Hmong every day.

Donna stated,

I feel more comfortable with the English unfortunately, this is because I use it a lot compared to the Hmong language.

Maddie further added to this idea and explained,

English, English is definitely easier just because we speak it more than Hmong. The only time we speak it is when we are at home.

Charles stated that,

Speaking is a lot easier for me. Writing in Hmong and reading in Hmong is hard, but for English, it's easier.

Phil additionally explained why he is more comfortable with the English Language,

I feel a lot more comfortable writing in the English language just because that's what I've been taught and what I've been learning since grade school. But then if we were to verbally communicate I prefer to talk in Hmong because that's what I've been taught ever since I was born, compared to, I didn't go to school for it, I was home taught and that's what I am more comfortable with.

All participants from the current study expressed no interest in ever living in Thailand or Laos in a question that the researcher asked. They expressed that visiting would be an option if they were given the opportunity, but to live there was way beyond what they would be able to handle. They explained that staying in the United States is best for future family and kids because of the many different opportunities in America. When comparing the different aspects of life between the two cultures, participants found that they were more content being closer to the American identity. America is claimed as their country because it is their birthplace and, because of that, going overseas to live in their parent's homelands would make them feel like foreigners. They also expressed that the

skills learned in America would not be compatible with the lifestyle in Thailand or Laos. Second-generation participants voiced that being born in America would make them feel like an outsider in Laos or Thailand even if they wanted to blend in. Jake explained,

To live there, no. I would want to visit but then I don't know to live there because I wouldn't be accustomed how living there would be like.

Mary explained why would rather stay here in America,

I would love to go back and visit, hearing all these stories and where my parents and grandparents have lived, I want to go back to visit their homeland. But if I can choose and go back there and live my life over there, I wouldn't, I think staying here in the US is best for me and my family and my future kids. And I believe more opportunities and better things will happen here for us than staying over there.

For Donna she stated that,

To go back to live in Thailand and Laos my choice would be no just because my roots, because I was born in the U.S. I am content here and I feel like there are more opportunities here.

Maddie simply explained why she could not,

No, I don't think I can survive there.

Cindy responded with a reasoning that her parents gave her,

Probably not because my parents told me that there's less opportunities there and more opportunities here.

Charles explained briefly,

Never been there before, but I wouldn't mind visiting Laos or Thailand.

Phil explained why he would not be able to live in Thailand or Laos,

As of right now I say no, from the fact that I was born in America and I was born in America. So if I was to go back to Laos or Thailand, I would be more of a foreign guy going back to just to visit really, not actually living there. Cause that's not what I consider home because I was never born there and I don't know what people do there.

Larry explained the Hmong as a nation-less group,

No, I wouldn't go back to live in Thailand or Laos because this is like, we don't really have a country and I kind of... I would consider America as my country now.

For Oliver he explained the incapability of skills,

I choose to stay in America and will only visit Thailand or Laos. My country is America and I was raised to live the life in America not in Thailand or Laos. My reason behind that belief is because the life experience and skills I learned from America is not applicable to surviving the life in Thailand or Laos.

Jane explained,

I would not live in Thailand or Laos, but I would not mind visiting. I feel like growing up in the United States has definitely made me feel like an outsider to those areas even if I tried to blend in.

Of the 10 participants, only one stated and understood that the Hmong ethnic group is a landless group. This is significant because it shows that, although this group does not have a country, it is not a concern for the participants since living in America already gave them a new country to call their own. Living in the United States has drawn younger generations to feel this country is their home because it is all that they have known or seen. Being American born could also trump understanding why the Hmong people do not have a country that belongs to them, as participants have demonstrated. They have demonstrated that, because they are born here and have been exposed to the American identity, they have considered the United States their home.

Participants also believed that younger generations down the line would be more influenced to lose their Hmong culture and traditions. Living in America, children will continue to be required to learn the English language and will comprehend the Hmong language less. Interviewees stated those younger generations will have less interest in

learning Hmong traditions and cultures because many show more interest in learning about the American culture instead. Hmong children's exposure to more technology and mass media portrayals of American cultural norms has steered the younger generations of Hmong immigrants away from their cultural identity.

Of those who believed that the younger generation are losing their culture and traditional preservations, Jake stated,

Yes, because most parents like for example my uncle, he told me that he would rather his children learn how to speak English instead of Hmong because since we are living in America you know, there is no use for the Hmong culture or the Hmong traditions. So I feel like if the Hmong people nowadays they feel like, maybe in a couple of years we might start seeing less kids talking in Hmong or understanding or knowing the Hmong culture.

Mary talked about the loss of interest,

Younger generations are more influenced to lose the Hmong culture and I think that's because a lot of them don't take interest in wanting to learn the traditions and cultures anymore. You see that a lot of young adults, my age or younger to kids, they can't even speak fluent Hmong anymore and it's sad. But, and a lot of them are stringing away from the Hmong culture and going into the western culture more, so they're more likely to lose the culture and traditions.

Donna explained the possible risks,

Yes, I believe the younger generation are at a very high risk to lose the Hmong culture, and I think this all has to do with, the longer you are...exposed to the American cultures and traditions you become more accepted of it or you practice it just because of the exposure. I am definitely losing the Hmong language so that's an example, and I feel like there's a lot of the Hmong culture, beliefs and traditions that I don't know of that is not practiced anymore.

Maddie explained by giving an example of her nephews,

Yeah, they are more influenced to lose the Hmong culture because now I know all my nephews speak English, they don't speak Hmong at all, they don't understand it. They're just more, they adapted to English more than Hmong.

Cindy talked about the influence of technology,

I think they're more influenced to lose the culture and the language just because as of right now there is a big boom in technology and so that's all they're about, it's just about their phone and stuff and that's more important to them and whatever is new on YouTube or something.

For Charles, he talked about the difference between younger and older generations,

Well from my church and just being on the leaders and officer for the youth I've seen that a lot of our younger youth are losing that background Hmong culture. A lot of them don't understand or speak Hmong fluently and some just don't know Hmong at all.

Phil explained,

Yeah, I feel like the younger generations are starting to lose the culture and traditional aspects of the Hmong people. From the fact that nowadays if you go out and you were to ask a kid about just the culture in general, they'll probably give you short answers. But if you were to go out and ask them about Kim Kardashian and the new Hollis Jordan's, they'll tell you everything cause the media is obviously more important than cultural, traditional information. Just the old ways.

Jane reflected up on her own generation,

Yes, because even in my generation we are starting to rely on the American culture and less of our Hmong culture. Some of my siblings don't even know or understand who the Hmong people really are and why we are here in the United States.

Interviewees expressed that even their younger siblings, nieces, and nephews have shifted their attention to the American culture. Some children have only learned the English language because their young parents have never emphasized the Hmong language or culture. From this finding, it could be argued that younger generations will not grow up knowing details about Hmong culture but, instead, will be more in tune with America's identity.

We can argue that being American born and assimilating into the American identity has influenced the loss of cultural identity. Second-generation participants have

expressed the need to reform traditional values of the Hmong culture because they are now living in America. Some suggestions brought up legality issues, and the researcher wanted to show that, because younger generations are exposed to more of the American culture, they would refuse to follow certain Hmong values. The ability to balance the Hmong and western identity is seen as a struggle because these two dissimilar cultures tend to clash with one another. This difficulty has been expressed in the use of the English language over the Hmong language, which can easily distance younger generations from the older generations. Being born in the United States is a significant reason why younger generations are losing their Hmong culture and traditions.

The idea of whiteness or being an American has changed the cultural preservation of the younger generations. This perception of assimilation has been historically understood that whiteness equalized privilege and normality since the days of slavery. With this insight, younger generations will continue to grow and look forward to being the same with their surroundings because that is all that they will understand and perceive culturally. As found in the interviews, the participants have noted that the concept of fitting into the white or American culture has transformed the Hmong identity. Being surrounded by whiteness, younger generations have strived to be like them because it is the dominant culture. Interviewees have noted that self-acceptance and wanting to be as everyone else played a huge role in shifting away from their Hmong identity. Mary explained the impacts,

I think within a Hmong family or community, we like to be close kept, we like to be close to our family members so that whenever there's an issue, problem, or party, we'll all be there. But having, being a Hmong American, or being an American, when we go off to college, whether it's from out of town or out of

state, or if our job requires us to work out of town and be far away from our families, when it comes to gatherings, or anything, it's harder for us to always travel back home for all of those events. And when our elders, when they don't understand that it is hard for us to keep coming back and forth because of our jobs, we can't just say oh I'm going back home, we have to request off work like two weeks ahead. it's a struggle, but I think a lot of the elders or our parents are more understanding of that but, we'll make it work, somehow.

Donna also explained some of the influences of being in America,

I think that the idea of whiteness or being American is a very, very strong influence on the preservation of the Hmong identity because we are surrounded by whiteness or Americans and we strive to be like them because that is the dominant culture, and yea.

Phil explained how America has influenced some activities in the Hmong culture,

Living in the United States I feel like a lot of the Hmong people are the same. It's just the fact that things, I guess you can say the Hmong culture is changing. Cause you know, we never really have Christmas, we never had thanksgiving but now it's a yearly thing for Hmong families out there just to celebrate thanksgiving, celebrate Christmas. Cause we never really had any of that. The only celebration we had was new year's, and our new year's was really different from the new year's here where we have fireworks and BBQ, like a full cook out, a full party. As our new year's, we just kind of a short ceremony just to welcome back the ancestors. So I think that living in the United States has changed our cultural beliefs.

Jane explained the difficulty of combining two different cultures,

The idea that the Hmong are in America has changed and influenced their agenda to shift gears. From the English language, to the education system and media portrayal of how things should be like, I think that these things have impacted the Hmong culture. We are surrounded by two different culture, and it feels like the American culture is wanting to take over.

The Hmong culture is changing even in the simplest ways. Some have expressed that the Hmong are beginning to celebrate American holidays that have not been historically recognized as part of the Hmong practices. Being able to become more modern and practical has guided younger generations to be more open-minded about the different

opportunities in America. From the answers that were given by participants, they expressed the idea that the American identity is taking over as younger generations become more exposed to the lifestyle.

Conclusion and Limitations

The Hmong people have come a long way from China and the jungles of Laos. The fear of retaliation after siding with the United States Central Intelligence Agency during the Secret War caused the Hmong to immigrate to the United States after the war. Since their immigration to the United States, they have undergone massive transformations in order to live successfully in America, especially the younger generations. It has been learned from the findings of this study that the Hmong ethnic group have undergone a loss of cultural identity while trying to live alongside the American identity. There is an obvious struggle between choosing assimilation or keeping traditional values since the United States is such an economically driven society. The historically strong roles that identified a functional family in the Hmong culture conflict with the American lifestyle. As found in this study, because of what the American identity demands from them, the Hmong continue to face challenges relating to the lack of historical recognition, racial tensions, conflicts between older and younger Hmong generations, and being American born.

The Hmong population is a unique group, and this research is significantly relevant. It contributes to the preservation of their identity. Their fight to keep cultural and traditional values has shifted with them for as long as they can remember. As an ethnic group who has remained together without a country of their own, they have been known as refugees

without a homeland. Although this has been the case with them for a time, they have always remained intact with their cultural identity. For the first time, since they have been in the United States, there is fear their culture will fade and disappear this century because of the younger generations embracing the American identity. It is especially troubling because the Hmong have little historical documentation about their identity and history and, therefore, can possibly become an unknown race.

The current study suggests that though participants were of the second-generation, many of their statements involved stories regarding their relationships with older generations. From this study, the Hmong identity is at risk due to the exposure of the cultural norms that younger generations continue to follow in the United States. This paper is not meant to show whether the Hmong culture is right or wrong, but to show how immigration to the United States is, historically, a strong impacting factor on identity. It is not the fault of older generations or younger generations that there is a cultural divide between traditions of the Hmong people. It has split them into two groups in the sense that immigration has caused younger generations to lose their heritage, their history, and language along with other cultural experiences. Immigration and the reasons for resettlement may cause the Hmong people to lose their identity because of the demands placed upon them by the host country's norms. Considering that they are unknown to many in the world, they fear that, in the future, they will become a race of the unknown.

To further study Hmong immigration and the ways that the emergence of the American identity has impacted the Hmong culture, it has been suggested that future

interviews should capture the perceptions of the first- and 1.5- generation as well. The current study captured the experience of second-generation immigrants to explain their practices of being American born as it reflects on their Hmong identity. Being able to capture the essence of multiple generations would help distinguish the differences between each. Moreover, the Hmong ethnic group has immigrated to other countries after the Secret War as well. Being able to compare their level of cultural preservation according to the country they currently reside in would also be practical in understanding which society has the greater impact on the Hmong identity.

References

- Adler, S. (1995). *Terror in transition: Hmong folk belief in America*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.
- Alba, R., & Nee, V. (2003). *Remaking the American mainstream: Assimilation and contemporary immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Allen, T. W. (1997). *The invention of the white race*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Asian American & Pacific Islander. (2017). *Why disaggregate? Big differences in AAPI education*. Retrieved from <http://aapidata.com/blog/countmein-aapi-education/>
- Brunick, N. J., & Maier, P. O. (2010). Renewing the land of opportunity. *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law*, 19(2), 161–190.
- Collegeboard. (2008). *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders facts, not fiction: Setting the record straight*. New York, NY: The Steinhardt Institute for Higher Education Policy at New York University.
- Conley, M. C. (1968). Communist thought and Viet Cong tactics. *Asian Survey*, 8(3), 206–222.
- Dan, P. Q. (1954). The situation in Indochina. *Pakistan Horizon*, 7(4), 177–188.
- Davis, E. (1979). *Yearning for yesterday: A sociology of nostalgia*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- De Bord, G. (2006). *Society of the spectacle*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314-321.
- Duffy, J., Harmon, R., Ranard, D. A., Thao, B., & Yang, K. (2004). *The Hmong: An introduction to their history and culture*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Applied Linguistics, Cultural Orientation Resource Center.
- Ellis, M., & Goodwin-White, J. (2006). 1.5 generation internal migration in the U.S.: Dispersion from states of immigration? *The International Migration Review*, 40(4), 899-926.
- Ely, J. H. (1990). The American war in Indochina, part II: The unconstitutionality of the war they didn't tell us about. *Stanford Law Review*, 42(5) 1093-1148.

- Foster, A. L. (1998). Laos at war in the shadow of Vietnam: U.S. military aid to the royal Lao government 1955–1975. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 29(2), 437-438.
- Grow, G., & Wiles, R. (2008). *Managing anonymity and confidentiality in social research: The case of visual data in community research*. Retrieved from http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/459/1/0808_managing%2520anonymity%2520and%2520confidentiality.pdf
- Guion, L. A., Diehl, D. C., & McDonald, D. (2001). *Conducting an in-depth interview*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, EDIS.
- Haney-Lopez, I. (2006). *White by law: The legal construction of race*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Harker, K. (2001). Immigrant generation, assimilation, and adolescent psychological well-being. *Social Forces*, 79(3), 969–1004.
- Hing, B. O. (1993). *Making and remaking Asian America through immigration policy, 1850–1990*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hsia, J. (1988). *Asian Americans in higher education and at work*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- James, D. C. S. (1997). Coping with a new society: The psychosocial problems of immigrant youth. *Journal of Social health*, 67(3), 98-101.
- Jo, U. (2002). California's generation 1.5 immigrants: What experiences, characteristics, and needs do they bring to our English classes? *CATESOL Journal*, 14, 107.
- Julian, R. (2004). Hmong transnational identity: The gendering of contested discourses. *Hmong Studies Journal*, 5, 1-23.
- Krathwohl, D. R. (1998). *Methods of educational and social science research: An integrated approach* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
- Koltyk, J. A. (1993). Telling narratives through home videos: Hmong refugees and self-documentation of life in the old and new country. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 106(422), 435–449.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Landale, N. S. (2011). The living arrangements of children of immigrants. *Future Child*, 21(1), 43-70.
- Leary, W. M. (1995). The CIA and the “Secret War” in Laos: The battle for skyline ridge, 1971-1972. *The Journal of Military History*, 59(3), 505–517.
- Lee, G. (2008). Nostalgia and cultural re-creation: The case of the Hmong Diaspora. *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 19(2), 125-154.
- Lee, S. (2001). Exploring and transforming the landscape of gender and sexuality: Hmong American teenaged girls. *Race, Gender & Class*, 8(1), 35-46.
- Legacies of war: Unexploded ordinance in Laos: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asian, the Pacific and the Global Environment of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives*, Congress, 111th Cong. 1 (2010). Retrieved from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg56094/html/CHRG-111hhrg56094.htm>
- Lindsay, J. (2002). *Why are the Hmong in America?* Retrieved from <http://www.jefflindsay.com/hmong.shtml>
- Lo, F. T. (2001). *The promised land: Socioeconomic reality of the Hmong people*. Lima, OH: Wyndham Hall Press.
- Long, L. A. (2008). Contemporary women’s roles through Hmong, Vietnamese, and American eyes. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 29(1), 1-36.
- Lucy, J. (1997). Linguistic relativity. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26(1), 291.
- Mannheim, K. (1970). The problem of generations. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 57(3), 378.
- McCarthy, K. (1998). Adaptation of immigrant children to the United States: A review of the literature. *Center for Research on Child Wellbeing*, 98(3), 1-62.
- McCoy, A. W. (2002). America’s secret war in Laos, 1955-75. In M. B. Young & R. Buzzsanco (Eds.), *A companion to the Vietnam War* (pp. 283-313). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- McDonald, H. G., & Balgopal, P. R. (1998). Conflicts of American immigrants: Assimilate or retain ethnic identity. *Migration World Magazine*, 26(4), 1-4.
- McLellan, E., MacQueen, K. M., & Neidig, J. L. (2003). Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 63-84.

- McNamara, C. (1999). *General guidelines for conducting research interviews*. Retrieved from <http://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/interviews.htm>
- Opendakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4), 1-13.
- Penrod, J., Preston, D. B., Cain, R. E., & Starks, M. T. (2003). A discussion of chain referral as a method of sampling hard-to-reach populations. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 14(2), 100-107.
- Pew Research Center. (2017). *The rise of Asian Americans*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 530, 74-96.
- Rapley, T. J. (2009). *The artfulness of open-ended interviewing: Some considerations on analyzing interviews*. Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reyes, E. G. (2003). AB 78. Retrieved from ftp://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab_0051-0100/ab_78_bill_20030617_amended_sen.html
- Roediger, D. R. (1999). *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*. London, England: Verso.
- Ruane, K. (2002, July). Reviews and short notices: Africa, Asia, Australasia. [Review of the book *Harvesting Pa Chay's wheat: The Hmong and America's secret war in Laos*, by K. Quincy]. *History*, 87(287), 397-398.
- Rumbaut, R. (1994). The crucible within: Ethnic identity, self-esteem, and segmented assimilation among children of immigrants. *The International Migration Review*, 28(4), 748-794.
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & McDaniel, E. R. (2011) *Intercultural communications: A reader*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Shaplen, R. (1970). Our involvement in Laos. *Foreign Affairs*, 48(3), 478-493.

- Shumsky, N. (1975). Zangwill's "The Melting Pot": Ethnic tensions on stage. *American Quarterly*, 27(1), 29-41.
- Sleeter, C., & Stillman, J. (2005). Standardizing knowledge in a multicultural society. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 35(1) 27-46.
- Social and Democracy Online. (2011). Immigrants and race in the US: Are class-based alliances possible? Retrieved from <http://sdonline.org/48/immigrants-and-race-in-the-us-are-class-based-alliances-possible/>
- Steibel, G. (1972). *Communist expansion in Indochina: Part one. The first Indochina war and after. Southeast Asian Perspectives*, (6), 35-59.
- Symonds, P. V. (2004). *Gender and the cycle of life calling in the soul in a Hmong village*. Seattle, WA: The University of Washington Press.
- Taylor, S. C. (1985). Tracing the origins of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. *OAH Magazine of History*, 1(1), 19-23.
- Taylor, P. (2013). *Second generation Americans: A portrait of the adult children of immigrants*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/02/07/second-generation-americans/>
- Taylor-Powell, E., & Renner, M. (2003). *Analyzing qualitative data*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Extension.
- Tienda, M., & Haskins, R. (2011). Immigrant children: Introducing the issue. *The Future of Children*, 21(1), 3-18.
- Tongco, M. D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research & Applications*, 5, 147-158.
- Tracey, T. J., Leong, F. T., & Glidden, C. (1986). Help seeking and problem perception among Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 33(3), 331-336.
- Uba, L. (2003). *Asian Americans: Personality patterns, identity, and mental health*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (1995). *Celebrating our nation's diversity: A teaching supplement for grades K-12*. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census.

- U. S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Selected population profile in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/uploads/4/5/8/7/4587788/2015hmongacsus.pdf>
- Weissboard, R. (2002). *Why do immigrant children struggle more than their parents did?* Retrieved from <https://newrepublic.com/article/120352/why-americanization-makes-immigrant-children-less-successful>
- Vang, X. (2011). *Learn Hmong lessons and traditions*. Retrieved from <http://hmonglessons.com>
- Yang, K. (2001). Research note: The Hmong in America: Twenty-five years after the U.S. secret war in Laos. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 4(2), 165-174.
- Zhou, M. (1997a). Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 63-95.
- Zhou, M. (1997b). Segmented assimilation: Issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation. *The International Migration Review*, 31(4), 975-1008.
- Zimmermann, L., Zimmermann, K. F., & Constant, A. (2007). Ethnic self-identification of first-generation immigrants. *The International Migration Review*, 41(3), 769–781.

APPENDIX A

General Demographic Information:

Q1 What is your first and last name?

Q2 Gender

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q3 What generation are you?

- 1st generation (born in your native country and migrated to the U.S. as an adult 18 years or older) (1)
- 1.5 generation (born in your native country and migrated to the U.S. as a child) (2)
- 2nd generation (born and raised in the United States) (3)

Q4 What year did your parents immigrate to the United States?

Q5 What is your city of residency?

Q6 What is your age?

Q7 What is your annual income?

- Less than \$10,000 (1)
- \$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)
- \$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)
- \$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)
- \$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)
- \$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)
- \$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)
- \$70,000 - \$79,999 (8)
- \$80,000 - \$89,999 (9)
- \$90,000 - \$99,999 (10)
- \$100,000 - \$149,999 (11)
- More than \$150,000 (12)

Q8 What is your marital status?

- Married (1)
- Widowed (2)
- Divorced (3)
- Separated (4)
- Never married (5)

Q9 What is your highest level of education?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Some college (3)
- 2 year degree (4)
- 4 year degree (5)
- Master's degree (6)
- Doctorate (7)

Answer the following questions with as much detail as you can. Some questions may or may not pertain to your specific experiences.

Q10 What do you identify as your ethnic identity? Why? (i.e. Asian, Hmong, Asian American, Hmong American, American, or other)

Q11 Does your family emphasize learning Hmong traditions and culture? Why do you think this is?

Q12 What religion does your family practice? How has it impacted your identity?

Q13 While growing up, how did you feel about being Hmong? (i.e. perception of yourself compared to others.)

Q14 Growing up what did you learn about gender expectations pertaining to your gender?

Q15 Because of gender expectations, what are some obstacles that you have faced either in the past or currently?

Q16 What traditional values or practices should be reformed? Why?

Q17 How are you doing balancing the Hmong culture and the Western culture? Explain if one more important to you than the other.

Q18 How have the elders in your culture responded to your decision making? (i.e. decision to pursue higher education, work in a different region, or extra-curricular activities)

Q19 Because of the Secret War, how did your family start a life in the United States?

Q20 How did you or your family manage to survive the Secret War? What survival skills were needed to survive in the jungle?

Q21 As of today, do you still wish to go back to live in Thailand or Laos, if you had the choice? Why or why not?

Q22 Are you able to read, write, or speak the Hmong language? If yes, explain the importance of knowing your cultural language. If no, explain what barriers are in the way of you learning or knowing it?

Q23 Do you feel more comfortable reading, writing, or speaking the Hmong language or English language? Why?

Q24 Are younger generations more influenced to lose the Hmong culture and traditions? Why? Provide some examples either pertaining to yourself or someone you know.

Q25 How has the idea of whiteness or being an American, changed the cultural preservation or importance of perceptions of the younger generations, and why?