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Untwining Threads: Second Wave Hmong Parents' Conceptualizations of Ways to Support Their Adolescent Children's Education

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ABSTRACT

UNTWINING THREADS: SECOND WAVE HMONG PARENTS' CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF WAYS TO SUPPORT THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

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This research identifies the support systems for adolescents' education within the second wave Hmong refugee family setting. The study examines the parents' perspectives on their own support systems for their adolescents' education. The work focuses on studying both the instrumental support and psychological care these parents provide their teenage children and interprets why these parents choose to provide these resources. Studying these parents' ways of supporting their adolescents provided a more in-depth understanding of why these recent refugee parents choose to invest of their resources to their adolescents' education and, subsequently, what education means to them. The research also brought to light the participants' understanding of American education through discussions on how they help their adolescents to develop resilient skills and stay resilient when faced with adversity. The types of support these parents provide are framed within their socio-historical experiences of being refugees; individuals who did not have a safe and stable shelter for about half of their lifetime. This study was conducted using ethnographic methods. I collected data through interviewing informants in their natural setting. Doing so allowed me to gain rich data contextualized within their culture to conceptualize their view of how they support their adolescents' academic success.

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UNTWINING THREADS: SECOND WAVE HMONG PARENTS'
CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF WAYS TO SUPPORT
THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

BY

MAO SEA LEE
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Lee Shumow and Carolyn Plum

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DEDICATION

For Hlob Zeb Lis-Xais Yaj Xab, who I never met but who served as a child soldier for the CIA at age fifteen: your bravery saved thousand others and will never be forgotten.

For the Hmong children, women, and men who never made it across the Mekong River and whose stories had never been told.

For the survivors who find it difficult to share their experiences.

For my future children and the generations thereafter, who will seek to trace their histories and heritage.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Political turmoil across the globe creates millions of refugees around the world. Refugees go through life threatening events in exile. They suffer profoundly from events such as rape, torture, attacks, and separation from family (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995; Malkki, 1995). Some even witness the death of their loved one. Nicholson (1997) reveals that during an escape, many refugees suffer from starvation, illness, and other physical injuries. With all of these inhumane experiences, Malkki (1995) claims that “the word ‘refugee’ has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance... [T]he label ‘refugees’ connotes a bureaucratic and international humanitarian realm” (p. 513). As refugees flee from their home country in search of peace and safety, some have and continue to seek asylum in the United States. The Hmong people, too, sought asylum in America after the U.S. lost in the Secret War in which they were allied with the U.S. (Duchon, 1997; Ngo, Bigelow, & Wahlstrom, 2007).

The Secret War created Hmong refugees. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited Hmong men and boys to fight for them because of their expertise in the Laos geography (Hamilton-Merritt, 1993; Hones, 1999). When the U.S. lost the war, the communist Vietnamese soldiers started to occupy Laos and suspected the Hmong of being spies for the U.S. Consequently, the communist Vietnamese and Pathet Lao started to persecute Hmong people in Laos. This catastrophe forced thousands of Hmong people to flee

Laos to seek refuge in Thailand (Hones, 1999).

When Hmong refugees reached Thailand, they were registered as refugees and were put in Ban Vinai Refugee Camp, which was the largest refugee camp in Thailand in the 1970s. It momentarily hosted Hmong refugees as well as other refugees who fled Laos and Vietnam during that time (Conquergood, 1998; Duchon, 1997). Ban Vinai was a temporary shelter for Hmong refugees until the U.S. provided permanent resettlement plan for them. Eventually, Ban Vinai was closed in 1992.

Two Waves of Hmong Refugees to the U.S.

A review of the literature indicated that the different waves of Hmong refugees that resettled in the U.S. has not been documented. But it is clear that there are two separate waves of Hmong refugees as distinguished primarily by time and location. By the time Ban Vinai was closed in 1992, the vast majority of Hmong refugees had already resettled in the U.S. While most Hmong people came to the U.S., there were also some who did not want to resettle in the U.S. at that time. Previous research has not explored this phenomenon and reasons why there is a subgroup of Hmong refugees who wanted to prolong their stay in Thailand. This group who prolonged their stay in Thailand finally resettled in the U.S. starting in the early 2000's. This latter group comprised the second wave of Hmong refugees who came to the U.S. in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

While these two waves share the common label of Hmong refugees, their characteristics are different in both salient and subtle ways. In the sections below, I discuss characteristics unique to each group and what makes the second wave distinct from the first.

First Wave of Hmong Refugees

According to the 2000 US Census Bureau, nearly 170,000 Hmong refugees resettled in the U.S. from 1970s to 1990s. This continuous, twenty-year of resettlement is what I call the first wave of Hmong refugees. The first wave of Hmong refugees was initially documented in Ban Vinai Refugee Camp. At this camp, the United Nations (UN) subsidized weekly food for the refugees. So, although food was scarce, it was reliable and predictable. This first wave came to the U.S. after the Vietnam War.

Existing research on this first wave of Hmong refugees can be grouped into thematic categories or trends. These trends of research are evolving and are analogous with the adjustment of the first wave Hmong refugees' live experiences in the U.S. from the earlier time to present. Early research focused on first wave Hmong refugees' psychological wellbeing post-Vietnam War (Hutchison & McNall, 1994; Westermeyer, 1986, 1987; Westermeyer, Callies, & Neider, 1990; Westermeyer, Neider, & Callies, 1989; Westermeyer, Neider, & Vang, 1984; Westermeyer, Vang, & Neider, 1983). Then, researchers were interested in how these Hmong refugees acculturated and adapted to the U.S. society (Hein, 2006; 1992; Yang, 1997).

Decades later, family conflict was a topic researchers were especially interested in as these first wave Hmong refugees had resided in the U.S. long enough for their children to acquire the English language and have integrated to the American culture primarily through schooling (Lamborn, 2008; Lee, Jung, Su, Tran, & Bahrassa, 2009; Xiong, Tuicomepee, & Rittig, 2008). In other words, researchers were primarily interested in studying family conflicts as a result of the bicultural environment Hmong children experienced. Now that the Hmong people have lived in the U.S. for over forty years, contemporary research on Hmong refugees has tended to focus

more on their educational experiences than on other topics. Many research projects examine how Hmong children are accessing and faring in school (Lor, 2008; McCall, 2012 & Vang, 2012; Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010; Xiong & Lam, 2013). Prior research on the first wave of Hmong refugees was reviewed to generate ideas about what the second wave of Hmong Refugees would be like.

Second Wave of Hmong Refugees

There are multiple characteristics that distinguish the second wave of Hmong Refugees from the first wave. When Ban Vinai Refugee Camp was closed in 1992, those who did not want to come to the U.S. sought shelters elsewhere in Thailand. With permission of the monks at Wat Tham Krabok (WTK), a Buddhist temple that serves as a rehabilitation center in Saraburi province, Hmong refugees moved to WTK rapidly. Thus, the vast majority of Hmong refugees in WTK were a remnant of the first wave. These remnants continued to raise their families in WTK, and because WTK is not a refugee camp, these families were responsible for meeting their basic needs for survival.

The number of Hmong refugees in WTK grew significantly within a couple of decades. In 2003, it was estimated that 15,000 Hmong people resided in WTK (Grigoleit, 2006; Hang, Anderson, Walker, Thao, Chang, & Hestness, (2004). This number only included those who were registered to resettle in the U.S. and not those who did not report to the administrative officials. Unlike the first wave that was registered in a refugee camp during the process of coming to the U.S., the most recent Hmong refugees were registered at a Buddhist temple: WTK. This group from WTK is the second wave of Hmong Refugees that resettled in the U.S. starting in 2004. Compared to the first wave, this latter cohort was comprised of significantly less people

whose resettlement took only five years.

Purpose of This Study and Researcher's Experience

The goal of this research project is to study the Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' ways of supporting their adolescents' education. Although families from this cohort recently resettled in the U.S., they already have children enrolled in secondary and post-secondary schools. Given their recent resettlement and their limited English proficiency in addition to their presumably non-transferrable skills in the U.S. workforce, it is crucial to examine how they engage in ways that benefit their adolescents' education.

I am particularly interested in studying second wave because I myself am a member of this group. I possess both cultural and linguistic skills that are central not only to communication but also to identification with this group. I share the socio-historical experiences of being a refugee with these families. I was born in a refugee camp in Thailand to a Hmong couple who survived the Vietnam War. My maternal grandfather and paternal uncle fought alongside the U.S. decades before I was born. My grandfather survived and managed to take his family and children to Thailand. My grandparents did not resettle their family in U.S. with the first wave due to two reasons. First, they feared the uncertainties of resettling in a country with a foreign language, cultural traditions, customs, and laws. Second, they still hoped they could return to their village in Laos. This is how my refugee story started.

I grew up in WTK and have vivid memories of my experiences there. I witnessed firsthand a wide range of life experiences a refugee undergoes. In particular, I witnessed how refugee parents struggled, feared, and grieved. I also saw how they loved, cheered, and hoped for better days.

In September 2004, my immediate family resettled in the U.S. Here, I have observed how my parents not only continue to advocate for their children's education but their own as well. For instance, my father, who had no formal education, managed to earn his General Education Development (GED) degree within a few year. He still continues to take classes at a community college and teach himself math, English, Chinese, geography, and astronomy while working full-time at age fifty-eight.

My parents' contributions to my education also played an important role in my interest in studying the parent cohort of the second wave. For instance, my parents bought me a talking dictionary and hard copies of Thai-English and English-Thai dictionaries so I could learn English vocabularies. They gave me the computer their friend, who came to the U.S. with the first wave, gave them so I could learn to type. They kept all of the letters and documents from my high school because they believed those were important. After a fire incident at my parents' house, my father gave me a box full of letters and other documents sent from my high school to me years ago. My parents provided me a car during my undergraduate study, and then they gave me a used Toyota car as a gift to ease my travel during my graduate studies.

Besides tangible gifts, my parents have provided me with invaluable resources so I can thrive. For instance, in college, my father would normally call me in the morning to make sure I would not be late for classes and to be sure I had breakfast before I left my residence hall. My father always presents me with new ideas and challenges me to think from different perspectives. He encourages me to expand beyond the traditional norm for a Hmong woman to make sure what I believe in will not hinder my personal growth and educational goals. My mother on the other hand, is not literate in any other language besides Hmong. However, her knowledge and advice on herbal medicine and remedies has helped me during my times in school. Additionally,

she contributes to my decision making as a student and always encourages me to reflect on my successes and failures.

Given what I know and have witnessed about how my parents contribute to my education, I was especially interested in how other recent Hmong refugee families engage in ways that maximize benefits for their adolescents' education. I wanted to know if they provided similar or different resources, and their thought processes about providing resources. I wanted to know if their socio-historical experiences of being refugees played a role in their perspectives of education and, subsequently, their ways of supporting their adolescents to succeed academically. I wanted to know what types of support they believe to be critical for their adolescents so that institutions, educators, and service providers can assess their roles and provide equitable resources to help these recent refugee adolescents succeed in school.

My multilingual skills and bicultural background give me a unique lens to conducting this study. First, as my narrative demonstrates, I had the socio-cultural knowledge of how to navigate through a complex, patriarchal society when accessing or recruiting parents to participate in my study. Second, I had the cultural tools of being fluent in Hmong. These parents are native Hmong speakers and are linguistically isolated. So, my Hmong language skills allowed me to communicate with these parents at a level where I understand the meanings of literal, abstract, and figurative language parents used. Therefore, I could analyze data in their original contexts to really understand these parents' perspectives on their children's education.

Research Questions

The idea of supportive parenting of schooling is a Western concept. This is because the roles of family members of an agrarian and Asian family are typically prescribed in that parents

are the authorities and important roles for children are to be obedient, to follow orders, and to accept parents' decisions (Levine & White, 1986; Vang & Flores, 1999). Thus, questioning whether one's parents are supportive is uncommon in Asian communities, including Hmong families. With that, what Western educators typically consider supportive parenting is problematic when applies to Hmong refugee families. To uncover how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents contributed to their adolescents' education through their own cultural understanding of what their adolescents need to succeed academically, I examined the types of resources they provided their adolescents. Thus, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents describe kev txhawb nqa (support) in terms of academic success?
2. How do Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents contribute to their students' education?
3. What do these parents perceive to be specific roles they play in their students' journey to college?

Methodology Summary

To gain insight into the life experiences of these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents and uncover how they supported their adolescents on a regular basis, I conducted a qualitative research study. I utilized the ethnographic study methodology and used purposive and snowball sampling recruiting methods. I collected data by using semi-structured interviews at the natural settings of the informants. Interviews allowed me to get both the breadth and depth of data on these parents' perspectives of support for adolescents' academic success. I used open coding data analysis in order to capture the different themes that emerged from the data.

Key Concepts Guiding the Study

Two key concepts are relevant to the current study: *kev txhawb nqa* (support) and academic success. I defined these key terms using both my own personal experience as a cultural insider of the Hmong community as well as definitions adopted from other scholars. *Kev txhawb nqa* translates to support, similarly to the types of support discussed by Lamborn and Moua (2008), Supple and colleagues (2010), and Xiong and colleagues (2004). This concept comprises of a noun and two verbs. *Kev* means the path or the way, which qualifies any following verb or verbs as a noun. *Txhawb* refers to support or push while *nqa* refers to lift. Hence, my understanding of the indigenous Hmong concept of *kev txhawb nqa* (support) requires the act of metaphorically pushing someone to accomplish a goal but also mentally lifting him or her up to a higher psychological state.

The first verb, *txhawb* (to push), involves more physical support, such as training someone to improve on a certain skill or giving someone material goods. The second verb, *nqa* (to lift), involves more psychological support. For instance, once a parent has trained a child on how to properly complete a task, the parent must trust that the child will be able to complete the task on his or her own. The second part not only includes trust but also fosters acceptance of and provides emotional security for the child. In other words, *nqa* (to lift) refers to the assurance of a child's self-esteem and self-efficacy for the newly mastered skill. An example of what *nqa* (to lift) means in terms of psychological support is when a parent compliments a child once the child successfully completes a task. This also includes actions such as celebrating or attending a celebration that recognizes a child's achievement. The concept *kev txhawb nqa*, thus, represents a process of continuous activities.

Some forms of *kev txhawb nqa* (support) may be more explicit than others. Explicit *kev txhawb nqa* normally comes in the form of material support in which a parent provides a child with resources such as a computer, laptop, internet access, television, games, currency, and other tangible objects. Conversely, implicit *kev txhawb nqa* comes in the form of verbal and sometimes nonverbal communication. Verbal support includes using anecdotes and life stories to instill values in a child and encourage the child to strive in school. Verbal support also includes complimenting or praising a child. Non-verbal support includes the traditional belief that when a parent rubs a child's head, he or she asks the ancestors to protect the child. Rubbing a child's head normally occurs when a child or a parent has to travel long-distance, like when a child moves into a dormitory for college. A third form of support on the explicit-implicit continuum is the integration of both materials and communication. Similar to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) where a novice can achieve with guidance and encouragement from an experienced teacher, this third form of support includes when a parent orally guides a child through a task. For example, a parent trains a child to be competent in a task, helps the child with homework, or has school related discussions with the child.

Similar to *kev txhawb nqa* (support), academic success for high school and college Hmong refugee adolescents comes in different forms, including both objective (quantifiable) and subjective (unquantifiable) achievements. Objective academic success is an adolescent's works that are assessed and are given a quantifiable value by others. This includes completing a class project, passing a class, earning certain grades or GPA, and earning certain scores on standardized tests such as the ACT and SAT. Subjective academic success is an adolescent's participation in events that are meaningful to the him or her, but his or her performance or participation is not evaluated by others. Rather the adolescent gets to assign value to that activity

or accomplishment. This includes joining academic-related organizations, submitting a college application, earning admission into colleges or certain academic programs, graduating from college, accomplishing a personal goal related to school, learning something new, and the like.

Overview of Study

This chapter presents the rationale for this project. The next chapter provides a conceptual framework of how I approached this study. I discuss how I conducted this study by outlining information on the methodology, procedures, data collection, and specific demographic information in chapter three. Chapter four presents the research findings. Finally, chapter five discusses what the research findings mean. It also provides directions for future research and lists recommendations for individuals who work with second wave Hmong families and students.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the theoretical frameworks underlying this study and the context of it, it is necessary to review the culture of the Hmong people and their core values in their family relationships. Aspects of Hmong culture will be presented in this chapter in order to explain the function of family, which will help us better understand parent-child interactions and also parental support in Hmong families. Finally, the body of research on education serves as a background about the views on education of Hmong people in the U.S.

It should be noted that the vast majority of the literature I used to frame this study were conducted on the first wave of Hmong Refugees. Only a handful of them were direct studies on the second wave. Therefore, I used the pronoun Hmong or Hmong people to refer to the people of Hmong ethnic background in general. Only when I make comparison between the first and the second waves of Hmong Refugees, I will distinguish which group I specifically refer to.

Family Dynamics and Values of Hmong Families

Hmong people have practiced the agrarian lifestyle prior to resettlement in the U.S. Historically, Hmong relied on agricultural resources and have engaged in swidden in order to sustain their economic system and big family (Vang & Flores, 1999). The intensive labor to secure food resources has influenced other aspects of Hmong people's lives, such as early marriage, large families, family relationships, as well as childrearing practices.

Traditional structure of family relationships inevitably plays a role in parenthood. As an agrarian people, Hmong families tend to be large in terms of collective composition. Hmong are collectivists who tend to cluster in a group whether at the family or community level. Their collective group memberships allow them to maintain reciprocal relationship with each other, which benefits them economically. It is common to find people of multiple generations living together in a traditional Hmong house (Conquergood, 1992). Responsibilities of each family member are defined by the gender and age hierarchies, where each member inherently conforms to his or her role.

The dynamic interactions among family members in a Hmong family can be understood by the hierarchical systems: gender and age. The gender hierarchy or patriarchy emphasizes men as significant individuals who preserve clans. There are eighteen clans, which are the bases for and define the social relationships for Hmong people both within the family and community settings. These clans set many essential and inevitable rules and moralities for Hmong people (Vang & Flores, 1999). The necessity to preserve clans emphasize the importance of sons over daughters. Sons are expected to become leaders for both the family and community. When sons grow up, they are the head of the household and are the sole decision makers (Supple et al., 2010; Symonds, 2003; Vang, 2003; Vang & Flores, 1999). The age hierarchy in a Hmong family reinforces children to respect adults and those who are older than them (Yang, 1997). Within this system, women and children are expected to follow orders and be obedient.

The gender and age hierarchies are interrelated in such a way that the normative structure in a Hmong family places the elders and men at the highest position on the social ladder. The hierarchies found in Hmong families may play a role in Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' views of parental roles and their contribution, particularly kev txhawb nqa (support) for their

adolescents' education. Therefore, the significance of hierarchical systems in Hmong families must not be overlooked when examining the parent-child interactions.

“Good Child” as Defined by Gender Roles

Gender roles are both a family and community's standards for reputation creation, particularly the “good child.” The traditional roles and expectations of a good woman are related to organizations of the house and family obligation (Lee, 2001a; Vang & Flores, 1999). For instance, Hmong women are expected to bear children, cook for the family, clean the house, and follow orders from their husbands. Some of the roles that girls and young women are responsible for are to take care of their younger siblings and sew or embroider traditional Hmong clothes. Overall, the most appropriate behavior for Hmong women is to be reserved (Vang, 2003).

The gender roles for boys and men, besides preserving last names as stated above, involve the ability to administer traditional and spiritual ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and celebrations for newborn babies (Supple et al., 2010; Symonds, 2003; Vang, 2003). These events are significant because they involve the calling of and spiritually connecting to ancestors (Symonds, 2004). Other traditional roles that Hmong men are encouraged to learn at a young age are for purposes of preserving Hmong culture (Xiong & Lam, 2013; Supple et al., 2010). A good Hmong man should be able to play traditional musical instruments and also be able to perform specific chants accurately at weddings and funerals. A man who can administer and mediate these tasks and conforms to moral behaviors is well respected because he fulfills the role of a good man. In general, the gender role trains Hmong students to engage in various commitments, including participation in cultural and spiritual events at home.

In addition to the gender roles, there are three qualities that a child must have in order to

earn the reputation of a “good child” in a Hmong community in the U.S. First is physical appearance and proper behavior, which involves parents or adults’ first impression of a child due to his or her clothing style, hairstyle, and language use (Adler, 2004; Lee, 2001a; Lee, 2001b; Vang & Flores, 1999; Xiong & Huang, 2011; Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2008). For example, children who wear baggy clothes are referred to as “bad” children and are perceived to be delinquent (Kaiser, 2004-05; Lee, 2001b).

Second is family commitment, which includes helping parents with household chores (Lee, 2001a; Lee, 2001b; Vang & Flores, 1999; Xiong & Lam, 2013). Family obligation reflects a child’s piety and loyalty towards parents. Finally, educational attainment is associated with being good children because education is understood as the key to get out of poverty and to move upward socially (Krashen, 2005; Lee, 2001a; Lee, 2001b; Mao et al., 2012; Xiong et al., 2004). In the larger social context, education represents success and prestige (Timm, 1994). Hence, the Hmong parents in the U.S. would use educational attainment to differentiate good from bad children. These three components of good children are, according to Hmong parents in the U.S., a part of reciprocity and a way of paying back to the parents.

The three main components that make up a “good child” suggest that Hmong parents’ concept of good children in the U.S. resembles the old and familiar concept used in the past. The concept of a “good child” in the past involved family obligation and conforming to the appropriate role within the gender and age hierarchies. In the U.S. the notion of “good child” has not changed entirely because it still requires both verbal and non-verbal social skills. Today, along with these two components, Hmong parents in the U.S. have added a new factor to the notion of a “good child,” which is education.

Raising Hmong Children in the U.S.

One of goals of the Hmong parents in the U.S. is to raise good children. Even in the U.S., Hmong families maintain a close-knit community by their uniquely shared childrearing practices. Their shared values in childrearing with other Hmong members in the community continuously enforce them to ensure their children do not deviate from the norm. When a child misbehaves, the community will look down on the child's parents. Consequently, this affects parents' reciprocity or ties with the community by bringing shame to them, which reduces their chances of collaboration with their community. The fear that children will become deviant provokes parents to constantly and explicitly remind their children to behave well. To ensure their children stay away from trouble, Hmong parents use stories, past experiences and perceived consequences as lessons when teaching their children how to distinguish right from wrong (Xiong et al., 2004). The ability to raise good and obedient children and the ability to bring up a socially healthy family is a way to move up the social ladders in the Hmong community. When the community acknowledges that a child is obedient, the community will look at the child's parents highly.

However, in the U.S. here, Hmong parents' ways of showing love are different from what their children experience outside of the home context. In contrast to European American parents, U.S. Hmong parents convey love not by verbal or physical affection but rather through sacrifice and hard work (Supple et al., 2010). Parents emphasize the demands of their low-skill, physical jobs as a way to support children and convince them to go to college (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2004; Xiong, Eliason, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2005; Yang, 1997). Hmong parents in the U.S. perceive "good parents" as authority figures who are obligated to providing basic needs for children and ensuring that children have a good future by preventing

children to get involve in misconduct or deviant behaviors (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2005).

Kaiser (2004-05), who studied reasons why Hmong parents are overprotective of their children, found that raising Hmong children in America is a difficult task mainly because there are other influences on children beside parental influence. This contrasts Hmong parents' experiences of growing up in traditional ways back in homogeneous Hmong villages, where children learned directly from their parents whether in dyad interactions or attentive observations of parents' behaviors. Accordingly, raising children in America is challenging because parents are overwhelmed with multidirectional cultural exchanges. This leads Hmong parents to fear influences from bad peers on their children, which reinforces them to engage in strict parenting styles (Lee, 2001a; Kaiser, 2004-05; Xiong et al., 2004; Yang, 2003). Parents also worry that children will let go of their culture and traditions (Xiong, Tuicomepee et al., 2008; Rick & Forward, 1992).

To ensure their children stay in school, Hmong parents have particular methods to encourage children to do well in school. They rely on both positive and negative reinforcements as well as punishments to motivate children. For instance, parents celebrate children's academic success by giving them gifts or materials goods (Supple et al. 2010). However, when a child misbehaves or does poorly in school, Hmong parents confront the child explicitly. Researchers found that Hmong parents tend to link academic failure with delinquent behaviors (Lee, 2001a; Kaiser, 2004-05; Yang, 2003). Because of the association between academic and delinquency, Hmong parents feel shameful when a child fails at or withdraws from school (Vang & Flores, 1999). Xiong, Tuicomepee and colleagues (2008) claim that because of "face saving", Hmong parents feel the need to protect their children from engaging in delinquent behaviors or

befriending peers who are delinquent.

Additionally, parents give their misbehaved children consequences as a way to teach morality. Teaching morals through consequences demonstrates that there is continuity in traditional childrearing practices of Hmong parents in the U.S. The different methods Hmong parents employ to motivate their children to do well in school—whether by using material gifts or verbal and nonverbal threats against children—informs my study by emphasizing that the type of support in Hmong families varies. It also suggests that the roles parents play in their children’s academic journey seem to be those of an authority figure who is also a source of motivation for their children.

Hmong parents’ high expectations of children appear to be a coercive and overprotective parenting style from the lens of the mainstream American culture. Such view is reflected in the children’s perceptions of their parents as being unsupportive but demanding. Studies by Supple and colleagues (2006 & 2010) state that outside of the Hmong American community, Hmong American parents’ practice is considered authoritarian. Hmong American parents expect a lot from their children yet provide little to no support for children to achieve the goals parents set for them. Supple and colleagues (2006) found that authoritarian practice in Hmong American family does not support Hmong students with their academic as much as developmental outcomes. However, the definition of “support” should be examined closely when addressing someone or a group of people from cultural background such as Hmong.

Education

Education Attainment as a Process of Reciprocity

Despite parents' fear of raising bad children, there are Hmong children in the U.S. who want to grow up and be good children. Many Hmong children pursue their educational goals. They not only see academic achievement as graduating from high school but also attending and succeeding at post-secondary institutions. Children who are inspired to be good children are also inspired to get out of poverty because of the hard lives of their parents (Adler, 2004; Krashen, 2005). Therefore, being good children means children must pay sincere respect to parents and succeed academically.

This, overall, shows that in the Hmong American community, being a good child is not simply a matter of dressing nice, helping parents with house chores and earning good grades but rather is tied to the long-term and positive impact each individual child can contribute to his or her family and the community. In the U.S., Hmong American children's educational success is also perceived to be their parents'. Hence, academic achievement is a quality that is being counted as a part of paying back to parents.

Nevertheless, while some Hmong students have succeeded, some struggle academically. When it comes to higher education, Hmong students are faced with various challenges. Unfortunately, most Hmong parents lack the needed expertise on mitigating formal education processes and hence do not know how to help their children. Consequently, they are unable to contribute directly to their children's academic needs in terms of providing children with academic skills and financial support (Supple & Small, 2006; Xiong & Lam). Financial resources in particular are critical to academic success of Hmong students (Lee, 2001a; Lee,

2001b; Lor, 2008; Supple et al., 2010). In addition, many Hmong families still struggle with basic needs such as adequate nutrition, reliable shelter, financial and material resources. With such, parents are unable to contribute financially to their children's education.

Gap between Parents' and Children's Notion of a Supportive Parent

Researchers have revealed that Hmong parents in the U.S. and children share a common description of a good child, that is, a child who has high academic aspirations and achievement. However, parents and children have differing views on what it means to be good or supportive parents. Hmong parents believe their roles are to ensure children's basic needs are met and to make sure children have a good future. They express their love and concerns for their children through sacrifice and hard work (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2004; Xiong et al., 2005 Yang, 1997). Hmong families have relied on these parenting strategies for generations when they were still in Southeast Asia. The continuity of these practices in the U.S. is not surprising as they have only been in the U.S. for four decades.

Through the lens of the mainstream American culture, however, Hmong American parents' childrearing practices may seem harsh. Some Hmong American adolescents, too, due to their exposure to the Western notion of supportive parents, view their parents negatively regarding their parenting styles. What Hmong adolescents encounter within the larger American society differs from their home, which influences their preference for a more authoritative type of parenting. In this case, it is the parenting strategies of the middle-class European American families that emphasize verbal and physical affection (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Xiong et al., 2004). In the U.S., Hmong adolescents' negativity towards their parents stems from their desire for Western parenting styles as a result of acculturation. The absence of adolescents' preferred

parenting styles at home makes them feel there is a lack of parental support, especially for their education. In other words, parents' expressions of love and support are subsequently not perceived by adolescents as such.

There are factors that contribute to Hmong adolescents' view of their parents through a deficit model. The generation gap, acculturation, and approach to academic support are the three main factors that lead Hmong adolescents to have a critical view of their parents. Xiong, Tuicomepee and colleagues (2008) also found that older adolescents' perspectives of life are most incongruent with their parents, which creates conflicts between a parent and a child.

Another type of family conflict that is commonly found in Hmong families in the U.S. is when adolescents perform poorly in school (Su, Lee & Vang, 2005; Supple et al., 2010). When children's academic performance does not measure up to the parents' expectation, parents would intentionally remove certain material desires from children as a way to motivate them to do better in school. However, children perceive this negative reinforcement as an ineffective way to discipline children.

Given this discrepancy on what it means to be a supportive parent, I aimed to hear from the parents themselves about their views of their own support systems for their adolescents. Specifically, the population that I studied were parents from the second wave of Hmong refugees. Because no study has been conducted on this group's view on educational support, my study will contribute new knowledge about the Hmong population in the U.S.

Theoretical Context

To glean an understanding of Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' conceptualization of kev txhawb nqa (support) from their own perspectives, I took into consideration their culture,

traditions, beliefs, and values by using appropriate model and theories to describe and explain their actions. In this section, I present the agrarian model, the bioecological systems theory, and the developmental niche theory to explain the complexity of family interactions and support systems in a Hmong family. Then, I present the cultural identity theory to explain the complex identity of the parents in this study.

Agrarian Model

Rogoff (2003) argues that when studying a person or a group of people, it is important to examine their experience holistically in relation to their culture rather than just certain aspects of their life experiences. Rogoff claims, “Cultural practices relate to the development of ways of thinking, remembering, reasoning and solving problems” (p. 10). This claim suggests that people’s actions are determined by their culture. The agrarian model is a theoretical framework that can be used to understand the life experiences of Hmong people, as it helps explain why parents engage in certain behaviors and have certain goals for their children.

Agrarian people are family oriented. Certain aspects of the life of agrarian people can only be understood by cultural symbols, such as how they design their houses, to how they define success (LeVine, 1991; LeVine & White, 1986). In an agrarian society, to be successful and to earn prestige means that one must produce numerous children. Children are considered wealth to parents as they are expected to care for their parents in old age, which boosts parents’ sense of security. Thus, the quantity of children is a symbol of the level of prestige.

Furthermore, agrarian people’s daily routine is based on moral standards set by family and the community (LeVine & White, 1986). They structure family and childrearing practices based on shared standards, including rules, virtues, values and moralities. Family is defined

through kinship, where relatives can rely on each other for economic and social supports (LeVine & White, 1986). Besides, contribution to the community is expected of everyone. The community, too, is a place in which one can seek social support. Thus, agrarian people have an interdependent relationship with family members and members of the larger locality.

At a young age, agrarian parents introduce children to engage in reciprocity, the concept that one will give back to the giver at a future time. Subsequently, children learn life-long lessons from their adults through their intensive child labor and care for siblings (LeVine, 1974, 1988; LeVine & White, 1986). Through this social practice, they learn to be obedient and pay respect to their elders as well as develop effective social skills to function in their culture. In LeVine and White's words:

The pattern of socialization that gives children the obedience and compliance to function effectively as child laborers frequently imbues them with lifelong positive feelings, varying in conceptual and emotional quality from one culture to another, but amounting to a filial loyalty that maintains reciprocity between child and parent. (p. 34).

This quote exemplifies agrarian children's willingness and commitment to serving their parents in old age as a moral standard. Children's relationship with their parents makes them pious and loyal to their parents throughout their life (LeVine, 1974; LeVine & White, 1986).

Reciprocity is not only significant in parent-child relationship but also relationships between and among community members. To illustrate the importance of maintaining a proper relationship with one's community, LeVine and White (1986) state, "Significant local relationships outside the domestic family are defined by mutual obligation, and a person's position in the community depends in part on meeting local standards of reciprocity" (p. 33).

This suggests that reciprocity, although voluntary, is also an obligation; therefore, this practice is effective for agrarian people.

The agrarian model provided a framework for understanding Hmong families in terms of structuring their parenting styles based on what is important to them within a family setting but also in the larger community or society. The agrarian model also helped explain why Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents take on certain role or engage in certain practice. The concept of reciprocity seemed applicable for these second wave Hmong families.

Bioecological Systems Theory

The Hmong community in the U.S. is relatively small and embedded in a multilayer system of communities. To understand parents' roles in their adolescents' education holistically, the various contexts and people that impact them—whether directly or indirectly—needed to be examined. The dynamic interactions among parents and children as well as families and communities can be explained by Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) bioecological model of human development. This theory explains the roles and functions of various systems and how each system impacts Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' roles in their adolescents' education. Examples of institutions within these systems include the home, school, and workplace, which could have both direct and indirect influences on the individual.

These institutions can be categorized into four different systems: the microsystem (specific environment in which the child is present, such as a home or classroom where a developing individual participates in activities, roles and relationships); the mesosystem (overlap between two microsystems, the extent to which expectations, scripts, and interaction patterns are consistent); the exosystem (social structures in which the child does not directly participate, such as a parent's workplace or the social network of a parent, but have an indirect impact a child); and the macrosystem (the broader socio-cultural structures that impact all levels of interactions

and development of the child, such as society, culture, and values). The chronosystem, which encompasses time and space explains the child's interactions with his or her surroundings over the course of development, is another factor in this theory. This theory could help explain the diverse experiences of these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents and their families who recently resettled in the U.S., their interactions with their surroundings, and their participation in educational system.

Developmental Niche

The developmental niche is a theoretical construct that uses the combination of both psychology and anthropology to examine human development (Super & Harkness, 1986). The developmental niche includes three different but related subsystems that function together to create an environment for a developing person. The three subsystems include the physical and social settings, which are the daily interactions between a parent and a child and how time is spent during the day; the customs of childcare, which are the cultural norms, practices, and institutions; and the psychology of the caretakers, which are the values and beliefs of the parents. These three subsystems are embedded in the larger social system yet operate together to create a coherent niche for an individual. However, incongruities can occur, especially upon moving to a new context.

This construct could help explain Hmong families, especially parents in diaspora. Their involuntary resettlement in the U.S. may have disturbed at least one of the three subsystems. Disturbances to any of the subsystems may have impacted how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents adjusted to the U.S. and subsequently their perspectives on kev txhawb nqa (support). This theory helps theorize as to why Hmong in diaspora hold onto their traditional values and

beliefs regarding childrearing although there is a major change in the physical and social settings as well as the customs of childcare. It also helps to explain how second wave Hmong parents navigate the new setting and norms as well as how they develop a system in which these new places and rules can be congruent with their beliefs and values.

Cultural Identity and Diaspora

Cultural identity is a theory that explains the changing identity of people in diaspora at the individual level (Hall, 1990). The two important components of Hall's cultural identity theory are shared ancestry and positioning. Shared ancestry is an innate cultural identity in which a person belongs to a particular ethnic group because he or she is born into that particular group. For instance, Hmong Americans are Hmong overall because their ancestors are Hmong. Positioning refers to the idea that cultural identity is not fixed but instead is an ongoing process. According to Hall, people constantly adopt new identities based on a specific context. Cultural identity creation is formed through comparison to or in relation with other people. It is through this kind of positioning that Hmong in the U.S. are Hmong Americans compared to Hmong Thai or Hmong Laotian. In particular and for the purpose of this study, Hmong parents from the second wave are unique and different from the first wave when considering their historical background. Further, the fact that they were from the second wave does not make them all similar at the individual level because each of them has different experiences and may possess different aspects of human capital such as educational experience, financial resources, and the social network.

Hall's (1990) theory could assist in explaining Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' role in their students' academic success in the context of higher education in particular. This

theory could also help explain the continuities and discontinuities among Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents with regard to their interactions with individuals in both informal and formal settings and, in particular, their interactions with school personnel, administrators, and educators.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study examined Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' perspectives of kev txhawb nqa (support) through an ethnographic study. The goal of this study was to develop a cultural insider understanding of how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents have contributed to their adolescent children's education, particularly during the transition from high school to and throughout college. This chapter provides a context of where informants come from, procedures for data collection, each informant's profile and family situation, and data coding and analysis.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents describe kev txhawb nqa (support) in terms of academic success?
2. How do Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents contribute to their students' education?
3. What do these parents perceive to be specific roles they play in their students' journey to college?

Research Context

This study took place in four different cities in a Midwestern state. Due to ethical considerations and respect for the informants, all names and places are pseudonyms. The four cities are BlueLake, Oakmoor, Newgate, and Westcastle. The first three cities are geographically clustered together, with Oakmoor located between BlueLake and Newgate. Going from any of

these three towns to another takes about thirty minutes. While BlueLake is the metropolitan city, the other two are smaller villages. BlueLake is also home to the biggest Hmong population among these three neighboring towns. BlueLake University is located in BlueLake. The fourth city is Westcastle, which is about a three-hour drive from the other three cities. Westcastle has a four-year university: Westcastle University.

It is noteworthy that the majority of informants in this study knew each other, although they live in different towns. They maintained relationships with each other as well as with other Hmong families from other cities. They regularly engaged in and attended social and cultural events, such as the Hmong New Year celebrations, graduation ceremonies, school events, cultural rituals, and clan gatherings. The lack of boundaries in the territory is one of the reasons I was able to recruit informants from different towns.

Relationships with Informants

Outsider Perspective

In spite of my ethnic insider identity, I am simultaneously an outsider to the population I am studying. My student status and the fact that I do not have any children make me an outsider to the world of parenting. I have not raised a child of my own and may not have fully been able to understand the responsibilities and sentiments associated with being a parent. Furthermore, the age and gender hierarchies automatically placed me at the opposite end of the continuum from these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents, who might have considered me an outsider.

To properly address the social hierarchies, I applied culturally appropriate data collection methods. The social barriers that could have resulted from the age and gender hierarchies were

reduced by my knowledge of appropriate behaviors toward the parent generation, manners of the culture, and respect for the informants. A potential barrier I possess as a young woman that might have prevented me from accessing a father directly was counter-corrected by speaking to the father with the guidance and presence of the mother in the first interview. Guidance through the wives served as a way to recognize the fathers as having a more prestigious social status than I do, particularly in the context of the Hmong culture. Additionally, treating informants as experts on the subject being discussed is also appropriate and helped reduce challenges created by the two hierarchies.

Insider Perspective

As a Hmong person myself, I have participated in events that occur throughout Hmong communities (e.g., Hmong New Year celebrations, clan gatherings, and cultural rituals). I have established a general network and relationships with the Hmong community in BlueLake. My relationships with the informants varied in terms of previous interactions. For example, I have seen some informants at community events but have not interacted with them. For other informants, I have had an interactive relationship with them or their children.

In addition, my status as a member of the Second Wave Hmong Refugees is advantageous to certain extent. This shared socio-historical experience allowed me to connect with these parents on a level that a researcher who does not share this identity may not be able to do so, especially because this group of refugees is a vulnerable population. This is when my status as a young woman, which is culturally associated with a much lesser power and lower status, become advantageous. With a lower status, I appeared less invasive or intimidating when asking questions that could potentially trigger stress or generate emotional responses. Our

common experiences provided these parents with a sense of security and a more comforting environment to share without feeling threatened. I was able to collect rich data in terms of breadth and depth not only due to the trusting relationships I established with them, but also the refugee status that I myself hold.

For instance, before Toua, an 80-year-old grandfather, was willing to go into details of his stories, I persistently confirmed that I wanted to learn from both him and his wife. He was especially hesitant, primarily for two reasons. First, he felt insecure for sharing sensitive information with a person he had recently met. Second, he did not expect that a young person like me would truly be interested in his life story, experiences, and thought processes. After I reminded him of the significance and purpose of my research, Toua inquired about my patrilineage and identity, “And so who are you? Whose daughter are you?” I gave him my father’s name and he continued:

Oh, so it’s you! You are [his] daughter! We do know your father [and] your mother... If you are [his] daughter, then we are the same people. We really are the same people, the same group! For this reason, yea, I can tell you about my stories.

Although Toua and I are not from the same patrilineage, he had lived in the same refugee camps with my parents. As someone who has been politically suppressed by warfare for decades, Toua was suspicious of his surroundings and found it difficult to trust people, especially those he did not know. Only after establishing a commonality with him through my father’s established social network, my presence and the goal of the interview were less threatening to Toua. As a Hmong speaking researcher who possesses cultural capital in the Hmong community, I was able to access the Hmong parent generation.

Procedures

I collected data using a semi-structured interview ethnographic method. Ethnography, a method of inquiry that permits a researcher to explore the context of participants in situ, is appropriate for this study because parenting is culturally-bound and context-dependent. So, to understand a situation, context-bound methods of inquiry should be applied. The phenomenological interview method (Seidman, 2006), a three steps interview process, and semi-structured interviews, in particular, are appropriate methods of inquiry that illuminated parental support using the informants' own words.

Constructing Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview questions for the first, second, and third interviews were constructed separately and with different purposes. All interview questions were constructed in Hmong to ensure they would be culturally appropriate, as I assumed Hmong would be the preferred language. (see Appendix A for both the original and revised lists of interview questions in Hmong.) For instance, I created the first interview questions with the goal of getting to know each informant at a deeper level. My intention was to learn about their life experiences, such as social interactions; how they raise their children; and the roles they play in their family setting. The first interview questions were informed by a pilot study I had previously conducted. After I wrote the interview questions in Hmong, I emailed the list of questions to two cultural insiders in the Blue Lake Hmong community to review. They gave me feedback and advice, and I edited my interview questions as they suggested. (see Appendix B for both the original and revised lists of interview questions in English.)

To gain insight into the daily life of Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents prior to their resettlement in the U.S., I created open-ended questions that would elicit longer responses (e.g., Can you tell me about your life experiences prior to coming to the U.S.?). To learn about the depth and breadth of each informant's refugee story, I asked questions about their journey (e.g., How did you settle in Wat Tham Krabok?). To understand their current life situation, I constructed questions aimed at asking for the various activities in which they engage in (e.g., What do you do for living now?).

The purpose of my second interview with a parent was to learn how he or she engages with his or her adolescents' education. So, my last question for the first interview was related to their adolescents' education. I ended the first interview by asking, "What do you think about your adolescents' schooling?" Finishing the first interview with this question implicitly hinted a parent that my next visit with them would be about their adolescents' education so they could reflect on their adolescents' education for the time being until our next meeting. However, I did not tell them what I would be asking during my next visit because I did not want them to prepare an answer in advance, as this could potentially limit any important impromptu subjects or alter authentic responses.

A parent's response to this last question was then used to generate semi-structured interview questions for the second interview. For instance, if a parent talked about grades, college applications, college selection, the value of education, living away from home, house chores, material gifts, or struggling in school, I then generated open-ended semi-structured interview questions about these subjects to collect more information.

All except two interviews were audio recorded. Soon after the first interview with a parent, I transcribed the interview. I took fieldnotes for the two interviews that I could not audio

record. Throughout each interview, I jotted down the main themes a parent discussed and wrote down as many direct quotations as possible. Right after an interview that was not audio recorded but in no more than a 12-hour time lapse, I rewrote my fieldnotes exactly as they appeared in my notebook onto my laptop to make sure I had an electronic version of the original fieldnotes. Then I created a different document that included the original fieldnotes, but I expanded on what each parent talked about under each theme. My extended fieldnotes were based on my own memories. I attempted to paraphrase what a parent had told me, but I did not include those as direct quotations.

After I transcribed each interview or wrote extended fieldnotes, I analyzed the interview data for preliminary findings to generate interview questions for the second interview. Based on what they shared earlier, some of the interview questions were created specifically for each second visit. However, there seemed to be emerging themes from the first interview among all of them. I was able to prepare questions that were applicable to all parents. Some of the questions I constructed for the second interview include “What do you mean when you said you were *txom nyem* (poor)?” “What did you do when (adolescent’s name) told you that he/she struggled in school?” and “What makes you think that a car would motivate (adolescent’s name) to focus and succeed in college?” In addition, participant observations also informed how I wrote my interview questions for the second interview, and these questions were related to a parent’s actions and the meaning of those particular actions (e.g., Why did you have a celebration for your child?). (see Appendix C for a list of interview questions for the second interview.) I did not prepare specific questions for my third visit with parents because it generally was a brief meeting, where I checked in with them and ask for clarifications and additional information they wanted to share.

Recruitment

I recruited informants from four cities using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The purposive sampling method allowed me to be selective about the sample. There were two criteria for potential informants to participate in this research. First, an informant must be a Hmong parent who came to the U.S. with the Second Wave Hmong Refugees. Second, a potential informant must have at least one child in high school or college. Because I collected data over a summer, high school students included rising students in grades nine, ten, eleven, or twelve. College students included high school graduates who had already been admitted into a university or college as a freshman, students at a community college, students at a two-year university, and students at a traditional four-year university. Because the Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents are a unique population, the snowball sampling method allowed informants to recruit more participants.

Initial contacts with some parents occurred in public and informal social contexts. I exchanged my contact information with Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents who expressed an interest in being interviewed, and I contacted them later to schedule a time to meet. The majority of the parents were recruited with the assistance of other parents. In the initial phone call to a parent, I asked to speak with the mother first, as it is culturally appropriate for a young woman to access elder parents without interrupting the social hierarchies in the Hmong culture. I explained my study to the mother and asked if she would be interested in participating in my study. A meeting time was scheduled when a parent expressed interest in being interviewed. At the end of either the initial phone call or the first interview, I asked the mother if her husband would also be interested in participating. I asked her to be a chaperone for me during an

interview.

After introducing myself to the parents and explaining the purpose of the phone call, a common question was, “Whose daughter are you?” Remarkably, when I gave them my father’s name, they confirmed that they knew my father and proceeded with the phone conversation. This not only indicates Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents’ social circle but also their selectivity regarding whom they want and can share information with. Regardless of the level of social connection among these parents, including those who knew my father, I made it clear that their participation in my study was entirely voluntary. I assured them their personal data would be kept confidential.

Informed Consent

Informed consent from each parent was obtained prior to the initial interview. Informed consent forms were made available in Hmong and English. All informants were asked whether they preferred to read the consent form by themselves or have it read to them in either language. All informants preferred me to read the form to them in Hmong with the exception of one informant who preferred that I read her the English version. Before reading the informed consent form to a parent, I gave a copy of the exact same form to him or her. I asked each informant if he or she had any questions and fully understood the nature and purpose of the study before signing the consent form.

Data Collection

As a part of the ethnographic method, I collected data through interviews, participant observations, and artifacts from both the parents and adolescents. For the purpose of this

research, only the interview data of the parents' interviews have been analyzed. Therefore, methods of how these particular data were collected are presented below.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The goal of this study was to examine the support system in second wave Hmong families through the perspective of the parents. Hence, semi-structured interview was an appropriate data collection method as it provided opportunities for the Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents to be reflective and develop meanings about actions with their children in their own words. I conducted semi-structured interviews to allow these parents to lead conversations by sharing their stories, experiences, and information that were personally meaningful to them. By giving them the opportunity to use their own words to describe their own experiences and behaviors, my position as a researcher was decentered and my assumptions as a member of the community were countered.

I utilized a phenomenological interview method (Seidman, 2006) to collect data and allowed the themes to emerge from the interview transcripts. The phenomenological interview method comprised three interview steps. The intention of the first interview was to build rapport with each informant while simultaneously collecting data on the informants' life history. During the first interview, I inquired about each parent's personal and familial background. The second interview focused on how these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents talked about kev txhawb nqa (support). The second interview inquired about their thoughts regarding their adolescents' education and the roles the parents normally play.

If a parent had more than one child enrolled in either the secondary or post-secondary educational level, I asked him or her to talk about specific interactions with a specific adolescent

if and when appropriate. The last interview served as an opportunity for the Hmong parent informants to reflect on the first two interviews. The third interview also allowed Hmong parents to clarify or add more information to their individual research profile. It was also an occasion for me to do member check to determine the reliability of the data from the previous two interviews.

Each interview lasted between 30 to 90 minutes. The time lapse between interviews with the same informant was between one and three weeks. According to Seidman (2006), a “passage of time reduces the impact of possibly idiosyncratic interviews” (p. 24). Having a time lapse between interviews allowed me to transcribe and analyze each interview, which allowed me to generate questions for the subsequent interviews. A couple of these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents were available to be interviewed only once. I combined interview questions from both the first and second interviews to collect as much data from them as possible. Interviews with these informants lasted longer than parents who were available for subsequent interviews.

These parents are multilingual, but all of the interviews were conducted primarily in Hmong, which was their preferred language. However, some informants code-switched between three languages: Hmong, Thai, and English. I speak all of these languages and was able to conduct all interviews without assistance. Nearly all interviews were conducted at these parents’ houses. However, one was a naturalistic interview that took place at an informant’s relative’s house while she attended a ritual ceremony. It is noteworthy that this was a third interview with this particular parent.

Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents’ Profiles and Family Situations

I interviewed a total of nine parents. Seven of them are mothers and two are fathers. Four

informants are from BlueLake, one from Oakmoor, two from Newgate, and the other two are from Westcastle. These parents' ages range from 34 to 80 years old. The number of children per household ranged from two to ten children, with a mean of six children per family. (see Table 1 for informant demographics). All parents are refugees from WTK who arrived in the U.S. starting in 2004.

Although I interviewed a homogenous sample, these parents' family backgrounds are diverse. Brief descriptions of the dynamics in each family are listed in this section. These parents' profiles and their demographic information were obtained through interviews, and therefore are a part of the raw data. These descriptors not only generate context across households but also exemplify their differences in family background, which allowed comparison among these parents and their families. The following provides descriptions of the informants' ages, formal educational background, city of residency, employment status, income, and the number of children they have as well as their children's educational level. Descriptions of family situation and social network unique to each family are described if applicable.

PaZoua's Household

PaZoua is in her early 40s. She went to school in Thailand for less than a year and attended EL class for several months in the U.S. upon arrival. PaZoua is from Newgate. She works second shift and her husband works first shift. PaZoua and her husband own a house. They have five children. The oldest two attend the same university out of town and rent an apartment together. PaZoua's oldest daughter is about to graduate from a university with a degree in nursing. She also has another daughter who just graduated from high school and will follow the oldest daughter's footsteps by going to nursing school.

Table 1

Informant Demographics

Family	Mother, age	Father, age	Level of formal education	# children in high school & College	Total children in household	Sources of income	Estimated Annual Household income	City of Residency
1	PaZoua, 40		< 3 years	4	5	2	\$23,920*	New Gate
2	Kia, 51		< 1 year	7	10	2	SSI & \$26,000**	Oakmoor
3***	Sheng, 63		< 1 year	1	2	1	Patchwork SSI	BlueLake
4	Dec, 77		< 1 year	2****	2****	2	SSI's	BlueLake
		Toua, 80	3 years					
5	Yer, 40		2 years	4	7	2	\$18,720*	Newgate
6	Mai, 30		7 years, GED	3	8	2	\$24,378*	BlueLake
7*****	Nou, 35		14 years, Associate Degree	2	7	2	\$46,280	Westcastle
		Meng, 40	6 years					

Keys:

* Although both mother and father worked, household income only includes that of the parent who participated in this study

** This is the informant's spouse's income

*** Single-parent household

**** Grandchildren

***** This family only had children in high school and not college

Kia's Household

Kia claims to be 51 years old, but she is unsure of her real age due to her parents' and her illiteracy. She had never attended school until she arrived in the U.S. Although she stopped attending classes, she wants to go back to school once she has reliable access to transportation. Kia is from Oakmoor. She does not work due to medical problems, so she receives Social Security Income (SSI) in addition to Foodshare benefits and Medicaid for herself, her husband, and her eligible children. Her husband is the only one who works. She shared that he earns about \$12.50 an hour. Kia's husband works second shift and bikes about four miles to and from work most days because he has to share a car with Kia and their adolescents. Another main source of income that Kia's family relies on is their income tax return, which they use to invest in their children's education by buying necessary resources, such as computers and laptops.

Kia has 10 children total, including her three daughters who are studying at universities. One of these daughters goes to the university in town, and another goes to school out of town. The third daughter and her husband go to a third school out of town. Kia also has two sons in high school.

Sheng's Household

Sheng is 63 years old.¹ She had never attended formal school until her resettlement in the U.S., where she attended for a limited time. Now she resides in BlueLake, and although she no longer works full-time as a store owner, she gardens over the summer, works seasonally farming

¹ Sheng had the most financial stability when she lived in a refugee camp in Thailand compared to the other informants because she was an entrepreneur prior to resettlement in the U.S. However, she was not able to bring her assets to the U.S.

ginseng, and rents a booth to sell souvenirs: hand-made traditional Hmong clothing, products from foreign countries, and food at tournaments, depending on the time of the year.

She is one of the most senior parents in this study and considers herself to be “very healthy.” She is active every day in addition to her routine of going to the YMCA every morning to exercise for two hours. With her healthy lifestyle and unique personality, she is an independent person and is able to complete many tasks in a day. Sheng explains that she is used to working hard, which is the reason she continues her entrepreneurship. Similar to an elderly couple, Toua and Dee, who also participated in this study, Sheng’s children are all grown. She lives in an apartment with two of her adult daughters where they pay \$450 a month. One of her daughters attends a community college. Sheng also receives benefits similar to Toua and Dee’s.

Dee and Toua’s Household

Dee and Toua are the most senior informants. Dee is 77 years old. She had never attended a formal school prior to resettlement in the U.S. She attended EL classes upon her arrival for several weeks and then stopped going. Toua, now 80 years old, served in the Vietnam War and injured his right leg. He had attended school in Laos for four years prior to the Vietnam War and spoke proudly about his educational experience back then. Similar to his wife, he attended EL classes for only a few week and then stopped attending.

Neither Dee nor Toua were employed. They receive SSI, Foodshare benefits, and Medicaid. They are from BlueLake. They live in a small one-bedroom apartment on the top half of a deteriorated duplex, where they sleep on futons in the living room and their grandsons, Leng and Yia, sleep in the bedroom. They use sheets of cloth with faded colors to separate the bedroom from the living room, which makes it difficult to tell whether their apartment is a studio

or a one-bedroom. Although their two grandsons live with them, their birth children are all grown-ups and live with their own families. Neither Dee nor Toua can drive, so they stay in their apartment most of the time. They have to ask their neighbors and relatives to give them rides when they want to go anywhere.

Mai's Household

Mai is in her early 30s and is the youngest parent in this study. She went to school in Thailand for less than a year. Among these parents, Mai is the only one who has earned her GED in the U.S. after seven years of interrupted education. Mai is from BlueLake. She has worked at her job for over eight years and now earns \$11.75 an hour. She has eight children: five with her previous husband, who passed away soon after their resettlement in the U.S., and three with her current husband, who came to the U.S. with the first wave of Hmong refugees. She and her husband work different shifts. Mai is on maternity leave and her infant was exactly one month old at the time of her first interview. Her oldest son, Leng, just graduated from high school and will attend a university in their hometown in the fall. Mai's son, Yia, is a student in high school, while another daughter is about to start ninth grade.

With the complex family structure of a patrilineal culture and coupled with the extraordinary circumstances that occur, Mai is in a unique situation. Her situation pressures her to be selective about the types and amount of resources she can contribute to her children of different fathers. Typically, a patrilineal society expects that more resources will be invested in children of the current husband. Because a remarried mother's contributions toward her children of different fathers are political, Mai explicitly expresses feelings of frustration whenever the topic of Leng's college preparation comes up.

Leng officially moved to live with his grandparents, Dee and Toua (Mai's previous husband's parents) after he turned 18. However, they still live in the same town: BlueLake. Mai's second child, Yia, is very sick, so the doctor recommended that she should take him to live with the grandparents before she gave birth to her newest baby. Mai and her family have been through many traumatic experiences, even in the U.S. However, these experiences lie beyond the scope of this research and will only be brought up to demonstrate Mai's view of kev txhawb nqa (support) when appropriate.

Yer's Household

Yer is approaching her 40th birthday. She had never attended a formal school prior to resettlement in the U.S. Upon arrival, she attended EL classes for a couple of years. She had to stop schooling due to family obligations. However, she dreams of going back to school once her family settles down. Yer is from Newgate, but she works in BlueLake, where she earns \$8 an hour. She works first shift for 10 hours a day, four days a week and claims the long shift at work is "exhausting." Although she has a three-day weekend, she barely sees her children and is working with her supervisor to switch to a regular shift: eight hours a day, five days a week. Her husband did not participate in this study, but she shared that her husband works second shift.

Yer has a total of seven children. Her oldest son, Phong, goes to Westcastle University and lives with Meng and Nou's family. She has a daughter who attends a university close to home and a son who just graduated from high school and is in the process of transitioning to college in the fall. Yer also has a son who is a rising freshman in high school.

Nou and Meng's Household

As a child, Nou was adopted into a Hmong family and resided in WTK for over a decade. Nou is now in her 30s. She has a total of 14 years of education in Thailand; she earned the equivalent of an associate degree in the U.S. Compared to the other parents, she has the highest level of education. Also, upon arrival, she attended an adult school for a limited time. Nou has been married to Meng for nearly two decades. Not only has she been engaging in Hmong culture, rituals, and traditions, but she is also fluent in Hmong. Given the experiences she has encountered with her adopted family, her husband's family, and the larger Hmong community, her personal life experiences are made up of the social and cultural norms representative of Hmongness. Hence, her cultural understanding of the concept of kev txhawb nqa (support) for adolescents' academic success is no less insightful compared to the rest of the other parents.

Meng is in his early 40s. He earned a sixth grade-level education from one of the refugee camps he had lived in.² He attended adult school for several months upon arrival in the U.S. Nou and Meng are from Westcastle. Nou cannot drive, but she and her husband work at the same company on the same shift so they carpool. Meng earns \$12.50 an hour at work, and Nou earns \$9.75 per hour. Together, they have seven children. Their two oldest children are in high school.

They bought a house with six bedrooms and two bathrooms and live with their relatives and friends. At the time of the study, there were over 13 people who lived in their house. Their immediate family lives on the second story, which has three bedrooms and one bathroom. Downstairs, with the exact same structural design, is where they allowed relatives and friends to cohabitate. People who cohabitated with them help pay the rent and utilities at a minimal rate,

² A sixth grade-level education was considered to be a high level of education in a refugee camp during that time.

although the amount and regularity of rent were not clearly established. However, a unique reciprocity that occurred is that those who live with them helped watch over their children under 18. Phong, the son of another parent in this study, lived with Nou and Meng and helps them watch the children. Phong and his family are of the same clan as Nou and Meng.

Data Coding and Analysis

These Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents often code-switched between three languages. Although interviews were conducted primarily in Hmong, they also used English and Thai words and phrases. A couple of them spoke in Thai for longer than few minutes when sharing significant information about themselves and their children. To allow themes to emerge on their own and to acknowledge the significance of these parents' word choices, I transcribed all interviews in the original language. I also analyzed the data in the native languages to search for themes that reveal their identities and trace their practices.

Once I conducted all interviews and transcribed them, I read each transcript and coded them multiple times. I used open coding to analyze data to explore roles Hmong parents play in their adolescents' education. Following Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997b), when analyzing qualitative data, I paid attention to repeated themes and the voices that created the emergent themes, I used domain analysis to include the differing perspectives of these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents. Domain analysis allowed me to create different and multiple categories of sub themes that supported the main theme.

For the first round of analysis, I assigned as many codes as appropriate to a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a fragment of data. By assigning codes, I broke down the data to generate small, concrete, and precise pieces of information. A total of 1,008 different codes were assigned

to all transcripts. Then I compared all codes and merged codes that were similar or closely related. For instance, codes such as “adaptability,” “adaptation all mothers go through,” “adapting to living without children,” “being a mother,” “sending children to school,” and “behaves according to children’s needs” were combined to one general code of “adaptation.” After combining similar codes, there were 883 codes.

For the second round of analysis, I looked at the individual codes I assigned to a word, phrase, sentence, or fragment of data and then assigned that particular piece of data into appropriate categories. For instance, a piece of data with a code or codes such as “giving money to children,” “children asking parents for money,” and “financial support” were moved to the category of “financial support.” For a single piece of data that carried multiple and differing codes (e.g., giving children resources they desire, giving children money, and discouraging children from working) was moved to different and appropriate categories (e.g., preventing ntshaw (to long for something), financial support, and delay of gratification, respectively).

After I assigned pieces of data to the appropriate categories, I not only looked carefully within each category to see whether there was a trend of topics but also looked for voices that diverged from the trend. Then I created subcategories for each trend. It is through these categories and subcategories that themes began to emerge.

Overall, this chapter provides the context, procedures, data collection, demographic information, and data coding methods. The next chapter presents the research findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This ethnographic study examined how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents talk about academic support for their adolescents from their own perspective. It examined the types of contributions these parents provided their adolescents as well as the roles they played in helping their adolescent children succeed academically. Findings presented in this chapter are themes that emerged from semi-structured interview data across nine Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents. The research findings are descriptive. Evidence supporting my assertions were drawn from direct quotations from interviews with the informants. The original data and interview transcripts were primarily in Hmong. So, I translated all of the quotations I present in this paper. In this chapter, I present the research findings for the three research questions.

Research Question 1

How do Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents describe kev txhawb nqa (support) in terms of academic success?

The parent informants in this study described kev txhawb nqa (support) using figurative languages because of the life experiences they went through. Three intertwine themes emerged from the data showing how these refugee parents describe kev txhawb nqa (support). These themes are: using indigenous key cultural terminologies to describe academic support, using metaphors to describe education and educational support, and refugee experiences influence

perceptions on academic support.

Using Indigenous Key Cultural Terminologies to Describe Academic Support

Indigenous key cultural terminologies are ethno-psychological terms frequently used by the parent informants in this study throughout their interviews. These parents used key cultural terms to illustrate both concrete and abstract thoughts, as will be seen throughout this chapter. I keep these terms in their original form in the indigenous language instead of translating them, because they carry cultural symbols and linguistic significance.

There are two reasons it is important to understand these terms. First, these vocabularies carried significant meanings to these parents. These terms were present in these parents' stories about life and refugee experiences, cultural norms, and childrearing practices. Second, these vocabularies were traditionally used in social and non-academic settings, such as sewing, farming, or smithery, which are familiar jobs to these parents. However, when I asked parents about their perceptions of their children's education, they also used these key cultural terms to describe their understanding of education and their support system for children. Education related topics such as applying for college, learning a new skill, struggling in a class, studying alone, and succeeding academically are topics that parents in this study explained using key cultural terminologies. Using familiar and non-educational related concepts to describe formal education showed just how that these parents are using their own familiar vocabularies to explain complex ideals related to education.

As a cultural insider, I have surface understanding of these terms and attempted to provide an approximate literal translation of each word. I presented these key cultural terms alphabetically and in the following sequence. I first provide a numerical index as to how many

parents used each word. Then I showed the frequency of each word mentioned by these parents. An approximate English translation then follows. I presented the definitions adopted by parents in this study last because the meanings they conveyed are more complex. An illustration is provided when appropriate. A glossary of these terms can be referenced in Appendix E. To understand the indigenous meaning, the terms in this chapter should be reviewed before proceeding to the rest of the results.

Mob siab

Mob siab was used by all nine parents in this study and was mentioned 45 times. Mob is to hurt, to ache, or pain. Siab, in its own context, means liver. Yet, when combined, mob siab literally means “liver-ache”, but most of the time it is referred to “heartache.” However, mob siab, as used by the Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents has two additional, figurative meanings. The first meaning of mob siab is to persevere, to persist, to be diligent, and to be determined. The second meaning is related to feelings. It is a feeling of a deep emotional pain due to rejection, humiliation, or being disrespected. It is also an expression of feelings of betrayal or shame. A person who is mob siab due to social rejection is most likely to use that intimidating event and the pain associated with it as a source of motivation to combat and prove others wrong.

Ntshaw

All nine parents mentioned ntshaw, and this word was used 55 times. Similar to covet, ntshaw is the feeling of longing for something a person does not have due to his or her personal or familial background that prevents him or her from getting it. However, ntshaw does not carry feelings or acts of jealousy or anger toward others. Instead it is a desire that comes with feelings

of sadness. The desire can be a tangible object or an idea a person constantly thinks about but lacks the necessary resources to attain it.

Nyuab siab

Nyuab siab was mentioned by all nine parents and was mentioned 52 times. Nyuab siab is comparable but not equal to being depressed or having depression. Nyuab siab occurs when a person feels that everything is too difficult to manage. It is when a person is overwhelmed but cannot resolve the problem.

Rau siab

All parents in this study used the term rau siab, and this term was referenced 84 times. Rau siab literally translates to “to putting one’s liver into something,” but the non-literal translation is similar to “to concentrate.” It is the act of being passionate about and actively taking care of something, whether that thing is a part of one’s short or long-term goals. A person who is rau siab focuses on one particular thing at an appropriate time, invests his or her energy and effort into that thing, and tries persistently to accomplish it. Self-discipline is a trait of people who rau siab.

Ruam

The word ruam was used by eight of the nine parents 20 times. Ruam can be translated to “stupid,” “ignorant,” “fool,” “dumb,” or “unintelligent.” However, ruam, as used by these parents generally refers to a lack of formal education or expertise in a professional field. When ruam was used, the intention was to acknowledge that one may not possess the skillset needed to

succeed at a particular place at a particular time, but one does possess other skills central to his or her social and cultural practice. I assumed that because ruam is highly associated with education, when a parent describes him or herself as ruam, it represents feelings of humbleness.

Tho kev

Tho kev was referenced by seven of the nine parents and was discussed nine times. The literal meaning of tho kev is “to make a path” or “to pave a path.” It is the act of slashing thatch grasses or trees in an impenetrable jungle to create a path so one can see what is ahead and can walk through it. In the past, this term referred to creating a path so one can go hunting or go to one’s remote rice field. However, when used by these parents, tho kev became a metaphor. The metaphor of tho kev is comparable to, but not the exact same idea as, Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. Tho kev refers to a journey, including an educational journey, that is less rocky because the major obstacles have been removed either by the agent him or herself or by someone else. Especially in terms of education, tho kev refers to when a student has been through something and has familiarized him or herself with the major obstacles in that particular path. Tho kev is the idea that because a student has been through it, he or she is most likely to succeed if he or she tries again. Tho kev is the belief that success is achievable through familiarity.

Tsoo

All nine parents used the term tsoo, and this term was referenced 24 times. Tsoo means to collide, to crash, to crush, or to smash. However, tsoo, as used by these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents, involved the acts of working hard in exchange for compensation. When the

word *tsoo* is used, it indicates a type of work that is not desirable but is the only way one can access monetary resources.

Txom nyem

Txom nyem was referenced by all nine parents and was mentioned 140 times. At the surface level, txom nyem means poor. However, when used by these informants, the term txom nyem involved struggling to survive and lacking human rights. This term is used to explain a situation in which a person lacks one or more basic needs for survival. It is also used to describe a person's experience of uncontrollable distress. When asked to explain their meaning of txom nyem, these parents mentioned three categories of struggles:

1. Physical needs, such as lack of food, money, shelter, or clothing
2. Emotional struggles, such as feelings of helplessness, emptiness, or incompleteness
3. Social and political struggles, such as lacking power at the personal level, being physically controlled, being psychologically suppressed, or being emotionally abused.

These key cultural terms are important and need to be understood because they are indicative of these parents' thought processes. These terminologies also represent clues as to why these parents described the concept of support in a certain way. For the remaining results, an estimated English translation will be provided according to the specific context in which each term is used.

Using Metaphors to Describe Education and Educational Support

The parents in this study used vocabularies that are typically found in informal, social settings to talk about education. What is especially interesting is that these terminologies are either complex concepts or metaphors. These parents compared their children's educational

experiences to their own life experiences when they described how they provide academic support for their adolescent children. To these parents, the process of teaching and learning in both formal and informal settings requires similar strengths. Therefore, it is necessary to turn attention to these parents' understanding of how learning occurs as their descriptions of learning are not without the use of indigenous metaphors.

Untwining Threads: Use of Metaphors to Describe Kev Txhawb Nqa (Support)

Untwining Threads in the Past: A Literal Meaning

The metaphors these parents used to describe kev txhawb nqa (support) derived from their own personal experiences of a learning curve in informal social settings. The learning curve they had experienced was when they were trying to acquire new skills to get a job at WTK. Therefore, knowing the types of job they had worked for in the past assists in understanding why the parents are using figurative language to describe schooling in the U.S.

In general, these parents worked two main jobs when they were at WTK. The first was seasonal work at farms owned by Thai people for which they were paid at the end of the day. Five parents shared they had worked at Thai farms. The farm owners would pick up about twenty to thirty Hmong people with a pickup truck at a specific site at WTK before sunrise. These parents worked in the field until evening when the farm owners would drive them back to the same pick-up site at WTK so that they could then walk home. PaZoua, for instance, described her experiences with seasonal work for Thai farmers:

There was no way to earn money in WTK. So, every day we went to work as slaves, as farmers for Thai people. Then at the end of the day, they just paid us like 100 baht, 120 baht, 130 baht, 150 baht...depending on the type of work we did.

Although farming was a familiar job to these parents and they already have the skills to perform this task, it was a less desirable job. Coupled with the fact that farming is physically exhausting, working for Thai farmers implies a lower social status. But, PaZoua's limited skillset gave her no other work options at that time besides farming, where she earned \$3 to \$5 a day to feed her family. Because farming is a labor-intensive job, some of the mothers in this study decided to stay at home to embroider.

Embroidering was the second type of jobs these parents had when they were at WTK. These parents experienced a learning curve through the embroidery work, where—according to them—their experiences of learning were relatable to their children's experiences of learning in formal educational setting. Initially, these parents were not familiar with embroidering. They had to learn the necessary skills. When I asked how they learned to embroider, a common answer was: "I just looked at how other people embroider and then I practiced, then I just picked up on it." These types of explanations suggest that these parents were self-taught. Mai elaborated that it required perseverance, patience, and *rau siab* (concentration) to learn the new skills. She shared her experience as a beginner for embroidery work:

My mother and I embroidered for other people [to get paid]. Back then, [I] was very ruam (lacking important skills) and didn't know how to embroider at all (laughing)... An embroidery project for a traditional Hmong skirt was very very long. When we finished a single piece that was 2-3 meters, they paid us 500 baht and we used it to buy a bag of rice for the family to eat... [If you were] really rau siab (focused) then you could finish it in like 2 days.

When Mai was new to embroidering, she had to teach herself. She acknowledged that she lacked the skills to embroider, but due to her persistence and concentration, she eventually learned and succeeded. Successfully learning the new skills means she could have this embroidery job, which meant she could earn money and buy food for her parents and brothers.

Other mothers in this study also learned to embroider and sew in order to earn money. A final embroidery work would then be used in two different ways. The first was to sew them into blankets and sell them to Thai entrepreneurs. The second was to sew them into traditional Hmong clothes and send them to the U.S. to sell to Hmong Americans. Traditional Hmong clothes are generally expensive and are considered assets. So, if one could learn the skills to make bigger products like blankets and clothes, then one had a greater chance of earning more money. Yer elaborated on how one could earn a lump sum of money:

I made my own embroidery to sell. There were many ways and many things for you to do. So, it was up to your ideas and situation. If you thought, "I'm definitely going to design some [traditional Hmong clothes] in this particular style and send them to [the U.S.] to sell," then you'd do it. But if you thought, "I'll make some embroidery and sell it to Thai people," then you could, too. But if you thought, "Oh right now I don't have any spending money at all. If there's any small embroidery projects, then I must take them so I can get some money right away," then you'd go ask other people and see if they have embroidery projects for you to do... So, it was up to your ideas and plans about what you wanted to do in order to help yourself.

Economic factors played a significant role in Yer's motivation to learn the skills needed to embroider and sew. She preferred creating traditional Hmong clothes from scratch, which includes designing different styles, embroidering the crafts, and sewing all of the pieces together to make a costume. To acquire these new skills, she needed to be creative and focused. She was able to create big projects and earned a lump sum of money because she chose to stay focused. She was determined to complete her projects and did not jump into smaller embroidery work to earn immediate cash in a smaller amount. She knew that to help herself and her family, she needed the lump sum of money.

Figuratively, I detail later in this chapter that these parents promoted embroidery skills to their adolescent children so children could complete a larger project and get a lump sum of money in the U.S. Specifically, I will describe how these refugee parents helped their adolescent

children to succeed in school by instilling in them values of perseverance, determination, and delay of gratification. These are qualities that these parents believed were necessary to have when learning a new skill. Findings on how these parents promoted these skills and how these skills helped their adolescent children are presented under the second research question as a part of parents' contribution to their children's education.

Furthermore, all of the mothers in this study shared that they learned to embroider by themselves. They learned without a teacher and because of this they often made mistakes as they stitched incorrectly. When they made a mistake on a cloth, they took it as an opportunity to learn from it so they would not repeat the same stitches. For example, Mai recalled how she learned from mistakes:

Sometimes when you were in a rush and you made mistakes, you had to go back, look for the mistake, and untwined what you had embroidered backward...to [the point] where the mistake was found. It always happened when I first learned how to embroider.

Mai had to untwine many times before she could finally embroider a project that replicated the original sample. Untwining many times before mastering a skill shows just how persistent Mai was at attempting to succeed at this specific task. Untwining is the solution to resolve mistakes sewed on a cloth. Untwining is the mechanism of producing finished products successfully. Untwining leads to learning. Although untwining threads could be time-consuming and frustrating, these parents were aware that untwining was a part of learning. The process of untwining threads provided opportunities for one to be reflective and learn how to be resilient.

Untwining Threads in the Present: An Analysis of Parents' Use of Figurative Language to Describe Education and Educational Support

The parents in this study described educational support for their adolescent children using

indigenous key cultural terminologies and metaphors. Their understanding of what it takes for a child to succeed academically is based on their beliefs of what qualities and strengths are necessary for one to have. Remarkably, these parents believed that learning in educational setting requires one to have a similar mindset needed to untwine threads. Figuratively, untwining threads in the present is my own analysis of these parents' beliefs that learning in both formal and informal settings required similar qualities and personal strengths. Literally, these parents described educational support as parents helping their children to persevere when children are struggling in school.

The specific metaphors these parents used to describe key txhawb nqa (support) will be presented throughout this chapter, and are elaborated under findings for the second research question. It is also noteworthy that these parents not only use figurative language to describe educational support but also education in general. To illustrate how these parents leveraged metaphors as an abstract idea that helped them understand education, here I present an example of how these parents compared education to light.

“Education is a flashlight” is one of the metaphors many of these parents used to explain the significance of education. They expressed how much they valued education by referring to education as a light. Just as a light brightens a dark room, these parents believed that education would lead a person to a better future. They believed a degree is the formula that determines the success of a person's future. Yer, for example, explained what the flashlight metaphor refers to:

A master's degree helps you. It's like a flashlight when, if you don't have a flashlight to brighten a road and you just guess your way while walking in the dark, [then] of course, you can't see anything. So, you need a flashlight to brighten the path. So, if you can earn a master's degree, you'll be knowledgeable, you'll be educated. Then, whatever you want to do you have the skills to do it. Whatever you want to do you will know “I must do this for this situation. This is how I should [resolve this problem] and it will result in this.” So, it's like a flashlight that brightens so that you can see. And so it's like a clean path

that others already tho (paved) for you. So, it's very clean for you to walk on and you will not have to be nyuab siab (stressed out) about it.

According to Yer, education is so important that it is comparable to a light that helps one see at night. Education can open many doors for personal and professional growth. Thus, if a person is educated, he or she would have a better chance of thriving socially.

Powerfully, Yer used the metaphor “education is a flashlight” because she wanted to convince me to believe just how important education is. Her comparison of education to light is convincing because light—whether natural light or power—is necessary for human survival. To further decode Yer’s thoughts, a person without a formal education in the U.S. would struggle to make a living. The second indigenous metaphor Yer used is tho kev (to pave a road). In this specific context, paving a road is the process of teaching and learning. Figuratively, when someone has paved a road for you, it means someone has taught you the skills necessary to succeed on a particular task. And, “a very clean path for you to walk on” referred to the successful acquisition of the skills required to be competent at tasks you are being asked to perform.

Using figurative language to describe education and educational support did not imply that these parents are inexperienced and have no understanding of learning at a formal, educational setting. Nor, did it imply that they are incorrect about their understanding of their children’s education. Rather, they used metaphors because they were aware of what they did not know. Evidently, these parents acknowledged the complexity of education and the limitations of their understanding of education in the U.S. by referring to themselves as ruam (uneducated). However, the takeaway from this analysis of untwining threads is that these parents knew that one must possess phycological strengths to overcome obstacles and achieve a big goal, such as

earning a degree. Therefore, they leveraged metaphors as tools to explain their understanding of this very complex matter.

Refugee Experiences Influence Perceptions on Academic Support

When asked to describe what it takes for a child to succeed in school, the vast majority of parents gave me a two-part answer. First, they would label themselves as *ruam* (uneducated), because, as refugees, they thought they were not equipped to help their children to succeed academically. Then, they would tell me exactly what they have been doing to support their adolescent children. The first part of their answer is the focus under this section as it relates to how parents' identity played a role in their perception of education. The second part of their answer is presented as findings for the second research question as it unveiled specific types of support these parents contribute to their children's education.

Parents in this study described themselves as *ruam* (uneducated), because formal education was a luxury they could not afford while growing up. Instead of going to school, they spent over half of their lifetime trying to survive day by day. It is through their views of who they are couples with the impacts and implications of their refugee experiences that revealed exactly how they think of education and educational support. Their identity and refugee stories formed four main themes that inform us why these parents were using indigenous key cultural concepts and metaphors to describe *kev txhawb nqa* (support).

Survival Stories

Eight out of the nine parents in this study shared harrowing stories of life-threatening events they experienced as refugees. These events included traumatic experiences of fleeing

across the Laos and Thailand border and secretly moving between refugee camps. They recounted that they and their families were scattered and unwelcome in both Laos and Thailand during the Vietnam War. They were constantly forced to flee as soon as they arrived at a place.

Mai recalled what she and her family went through at the border:

We couldn't farm. We couldn't build a house because we had no stable place to live... We slept 2 to 3 nights on this side, then the Thais came to chase us out. So, we ran to the other side... and spent 1 to 2 nights there and would make a hut using banana leaves. Then, the Laotians³ would come hunt us down, too... The Vietnamese came back to shoot [us], too, so we ran back to Thailand... At that time, [we] just hid in the forest, hid at the Hmong Thais' rice fields with no safety, no safe place to live... So it was always like this.

Mai's story illustrated that there was no permanent and safe shelter during exile. She and her family lived in fear without knowing when the enemies would arrive.

In addition to moving between the two countries, some of these parents and their families decided to flee refugee camps due to various uncertainties confronting their future. Among the individuals dealing with this atrocity was Meng and his family who secretly left Ban Vinai and moved to northern Thailand. While Meng was only a child he has vivid memories of living at multiple camps:

We stayed in Ban Vinai until it was closed. Then, all of us moved. There were some [people] that moved to America. And there were some that...moved to the Hmong Thai region [the few provinces in in northern Thailand]. And for us, we moved to the Hmong Thai region. We stayed there, [and] we were very txom nyem (poor), [because] we did not have any [legal] documents.

When Ban Vinai was closing, Meng's parents did not know whom to trust. So, in the midst of uncertainty, his parents decided to take their family to northern Thailand. They soon learned that outside of the refugee camp they would struggle even more, because they were considered illegal

³ These Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents refer to the Pathet Lao as Laotian and the Red Laotian.

immigrants. After spending a couple of years in northern Thailand, Meng's family moved to WTK because they did not have access to a reliable place to live or land to farm. As a child, Meng's life was affected by his parents' decisions.

Furthermore, these parents encountered different experiences when they fled the war. This include when they escaped Laos as well as when they fled refugee camps in Thailand because they no longer felt safe there. While the majority of these parents disclosed limited to no preparation for leaving a dangerous place, one mother shared about the process of planning to run away from a refugee camp. PaZoua's story about escaping a refugee camp was the most strategic among these parents, albeit risky. PaZoua's family moved out on their own to find a safe place to live that would also give them freedom. She credited her husband for his bravery in taking initiative and secretly moving his family out of a refugee camp. She shared what was in her husband's mind at that time:

Oh [my husband] thought, "My parents don't want to go back to Laos. And, in the refugee camp, we are being controlled by authorities all the time. And everything is so difficult for us. There's no freedom, not even for a single day. We can't do anything at all. Our hearts are very txom nyem (helpless). [We are] txom nyem (poor) financially. No money to spend. It's so hard."

She continued sharing what her husband said to her:

[I] also heard that there were a lot of people who escaped [from refugee camps] and went to [WTK] and they are so free [there]. [I heard people said], "You'll be free at [WTK]! You can go in and out and no one will monitor you...no one bothers you!"

After PaZoua told me about her conversation with her husband that occurred over two decades ago, she commented, "So, [my husband] told us that he wanted to go take a look at [WTK] and see what it's like. And he did!"

After visiting WTK, her husband went back to the refugee camp and prepared her family for a life-changing flight. PaZoua remembered the frightening process of how her family

managed to escape from the refugee camp, “There was no way we could leave using the main entrance [of the refugee camp]. We sneaked out through the barbwire fence. And, if [any authorities] saw us, they’d catch us.” She eagerly shared how she and her family packed their household items and slid each bag under the barbwire by using her hands to illustrate their actions:

We secretly sent our stuff first, like, we bagged our stuff and slid them under the barbwire fence, yeah. Then, we crawled under the barbwire fence to the other side. Then, we paid some Thai people to deliver our stuff to [WTK]... [Then], there were some Hmong people...who always went back and forth [between the refugee camp and WTK] and they knew the roads really well, they came to lead us and so we left!

Having a young and healthy man in PaZoua’s family benefited them in terms of seeking resources to plan a flight from a place they no longer felt safe at. When her husband traveled to WTK, her father-in-law stayed behind with the family. Having a male figure in the family provided them assurance that the family would be protected because men are associated with both physical and psychological strengths.

PaZoua’s family’s plan included actively seeking information about the new place and hiring experts to lead their way. However, that is not to say that they fled without fear of consequences. They were afraid of the authorities and that was why her husband traveled alone to survey WTK. Their fear of getting caught also led them to escape at night. As PaZoua put it, her husband “had already visited WTK and had already tho kev (paved a path)” for her family. Thus, they were more aware of what approach would be less risky.

On the contrary, Mai’s family was not as lucky as PaZoua’s family. She and her family fled Laos after Ban Vinai was closed. But, when they arrived in Thailand, they were misinformed by some Thai men that the refugee camp was still open. This encounter was a scam that Mai and her family experienced, and they were eventually captured by the Thai men they

initially trusted. She lowered her voice and spoke slowly about her experience:

When my family and I arrived in Thailand, we hired some Thai men to take us to the refugee camp. They said they would take us and so we paid them. It turned out they were just lying to us. They did not take us [to the refugee camp]... They took our money and locked us up in a pigsty. We stayed in the muddy pigsty for days. At the end, they just let us go because we really had no more money for them.

Although Mai could not remember how old she was when this incident happened, she remembered how she and her family were taken to the muddy pigsty. She was a child at that time, but this traumatic experience continues to remain with her.

The majority of these parents went through unimaginably harsh times as children. Given the severity of each tragedy they encountered and the magnitude of the impacts of these incidents, these parents are not ordinary. Their experiences are unique and show that they are survivors. And when examining their perceptions of and support for their adolescent children's education, this survivor aspect of their personal strengths cannot be neglected because it plays such a vital role in how they understand what it takes to thrive in life.

Surviving in WTK

Participants in this study collectively shared that they felt protected and safer at WTK, which was one of the main reasons they moved there. WTK is a Buddhist temple that provides rehabilitation for drug and alcohol addicts, and some Hmong families used that as an excuse to gain admission to the camp. Toua's family, for instance, moved to WTK for both benefits: to be safe and to be treated for opium addiction. Toua became addicted to opium after using opium as an anesthetic for injuries on his entire right leg. In my interview with Toua, he disclosed that he went to WTK for drug rehabilitation. He shared how he had become addicted to opium: "I

stepped on a bomb⁴ during the Vietnam War in 1964.” As he was speaking, he rolled up his right pant and showed me the scars. The damages and scars on his right leg—starting from his foot all the way up to his upper thigh—have left his leg with less flesh and his bones nearly visible to my eyes. He continued,

No surgery was done on me and so there are still pieces of those parts inside my leg [today]. At that time, there was no medicine and [my leg] hurt so badly. So, I used opium to help ease the pain.

By the time Toua’s leg was better, he was already an opium addict. Although Toua and his family had lived in Ban Vinai, he did not pass the intensive drug screening process and so his family could not come to the U.S. with the first wave of Hmong refugees.

In addition, Dee who is Toua’s wife, commented that they had registered at WTK using the drug rehabilitation as their reason for admission. However, they were actually seeking to move there permanently. Dee talked about why her family went to WTK:

We heard that there were a lot of people who were opium addicts and they went to [WTK] to stop using opium. So, we went there, too... We went there and registered our names so we could live in the camp, too.

Similar to other parents in this study, Dee perceived WTK to be a safer place for her family, and at the same time, Toua could take advantage of the drug rehab program. So, both of these factors motivated her family to move there.

Furthermore, survival outside of an official refugee camp requires that these refugee parents and their families help each other. This included sharing information as stated previously as well as monetary resources. Mai is among the parents who shared about their journey of moving to WTK successfully because of the help of other refugee families. She recalled:

When your grandparents went to [WTK], we also went with them, too... That was the end of the world for us [because] we didn’t have anywhere to go. And it just happened

⁴ Perhaps, Toua did not step on an actual bomb, but it was most likely a hand grenade.

that your grandparents rented a huge, huge truck so my mother asked them to help us pay for the [ride] so that we could escape with them...because we were really really txom nyem (poor), yea.

Mai and her family moved to northern Thailand after they were released from the Thai men who held them captured at the pigsty. There, she and her family met other Hmong refugee families, and eventually as a group, they decided to move to WTK. Mai's recollection of her family's journey to WTK reveals that while most refugees' experiences are harsh, they also helped each other to survive. Despite doubt about the unknown future and fear of possible persecution at any minute, Mai's family and other Hmong refugees acknowledged that survival was more important than any assets they possessed.

What also stands out about Mai's stories is how her family was reconnected with their relatives during exile. Although she was the only one who shared about reuniting with kin, this social tie played a significant role in her survival story. Mai disclosed that fears of persecution eventually grouped Hmong refugees together although they did not know each other. The repeated activities of racing across the border between the two neighboring countries led them to become familiar with one another and later to look after each other. Subsequently, they learned about each other's patrilineage and eventually reconnected with their long-lost relatives. Mai further shared that her family and my grandparents' family were strangers who met at the Laos and Thailand border while trying to escape the war: "[We] didn't know each other at all, but we learned about each other's families and ancestors when we were at the border... [Before that], we were just strangers to each other!"

It is important to note here once again that WTK was not an official refugee camp. Although WTK was a safer and a more stable place for these families, material and monetary resources were a scarcity at this camp. Refugees were no longer received weekly subsidized

meals and were fully responsible for meeting their own basic needs for survival. For instance,

Meng explained how he helped his family to secure resources and daily food at WTK:

Yea, so when we lived in WTK we were txom nyem (poor) *way* more compared to when we were in Ban Vinai... When we were in Ban Vinai we were txom nyem (poor) because one, ...we did not have any money. Two, ... we did not have enough food... These were reasons we kept moving. When we moved to WTK, there was still no way for us to earn money. But the good thing was that the respected monk lived there, too. So, he allowed us to build houses there. So, he allowed people to come and take us to work seasonally and so we...used the money we got from work to buy food... So, this was a good thing, too. But, at the same time this was something that made us txom nyem (poor), too, very txom nyem (poor) because we could only earn enough money in a day to buy the next day's meals.

Meng's family kept moving not only because they wanted to be free but because they were in great fear of being persecuted. Meng claimed he felt safer in WTK although the magnitude of poverty was more significant compared to living at an official refugee camp like Ban Vinai.

Overall, each of these parents could identify with the feeling of being safer at WTK, which was a factor that contributed to their survival story. WTK was a protected religious territory of the monks, and there was no warfare activity there. Although the monks could not provide legal status to these refugees, they helped Hmong refugees with transitioning to WTK and offered them opportunities to earn money. The monks provided immediate housing for new refugees upon arrival. Those families who were ready to move out of the housing project would then be given a piece of land to build a house. Also, what is remarkable is that these Hmong refugees have different cultural and religious backgrounds than the monks at WTK. Yet, they were able to look beyond these differences and accepted help from the monks. It is their relationships with the monks that played an important role in their survival stories in Thailand.

Falling Behind: Creation of Second Wave of Hmong Refugees Parents' Identity

The third theme of how refugee experiences influence these parents' perceptions on education is *falling behind*. The parents in this study fell behind because they did not come to the U.S. with the first wave of Hmong refugees. They fell behind because they spent many more years living Thailand without being recognized as refugees. They fell behind because they came to the U.S. in the 2000's, which is the marking of the second wave Hmong refugee cohort.

There are three factors that contribute to these parents' resettlement in the U.S. as the second wave. Age was the first one. Between the 1970's and 1990's when the first wave of Hmong refugees resettled in the U.S., most of the parents in this study were children and teenagers. Their minor status prevented them from choosing a resettlement plan as they were under their parents' custody. As a survival instinct, most of their parents were doubtful about almost anything they came across during exile. They did not know who to trust. They were unsure of what information was correct and which source was reliable. Some even doubted that resettlement in the U.S. was a scam and believed they would be sent back to the Pathet Laos to be executed instead. Fear of death forced these parents and their families to move numerous times throughout Laos and Thailand. As a result, seven of these nine parents had lived in more than one refugee camp during their childhood.

The second reason these parents resettled in the U.S. in the 2000's is because they moved from Laos to Thailand after Ban Vinai was already closed. For instance, Mai and her family fled Laos at a later time. By the time they reached Thailand, Ban Vinai was no longer registering or accepting refugees. She exclaimed:

We lived in Laos and then we escaped Laos and went to the [Laos and Thailand] border. Then, we went to [WTK]. We did not get to live in Ban Vinai... [When] we were [at the

border], Ban Vinai was already closed.

Consequently, fleeing Laos at this time caused Mai and her family to fall behind in terms of coming to the U.S. with the first wave. They fell behind not because they refused the resettlement plan but because they never had the chance to be registered as refugees.

Health condition was the third reason and was only referenced by one family. Dee and Toua's family could not pass the extensive health screening, so they were not allowed to come to the U.S. Dee shared that she wanted to come to the U.S. earlier, but her husband, Toua, did not pass the drug tests as he used opium at that time. She described in an emotional and soft voice, "We wanted to come to the U.S., but my family did not pass the screening process because of [Toua]." Consequently, health condition impacted this family's resettlement plan.

Interesting, Sheng who is the healthy and older mother in this study told me stories about the drug screening process. She told me that she heard stories about older parents who used drugs and would have never passed the drug screen. Yet, some people passed the drug test because they asked their children for help. When I turned off the audio recorder and was about to leave after my interview with Sheng, she continued sharing about the stories she heard:

There were some people, older people who use drugs but they really really wanted to come to the U.S. So, they would ask their sons or daughters-in-law for a pee sample. They let their sons or daughters-in-law peed in a small plastic bag. They would take a bag and tied it to their waist so when they went in for a urine test, they would pretend that they are going to pee. But, when they were in the bathroom alone, they just poured the pee from the bag they brought with them to the container. You don't even know how many people cheated by doing that.

These stories about how older people who were opium addicts could cheat their way to pass the drug test shows just how desperate refugees wanted to seek safety the U.S. And, it is also true for the majority of the parents in this study that they wanted to come to the U.S. to escape persecution. The only exception was Sheng. Unlike the majority voices, Sheng and her husband

did not want to come to the U.S. However, she later decided to take her children to the U.S., which is why she came to the U.S. as a second save member.

Because these parents fell behind the first wave of Hmong refugees, they see themselves as a different identity group. They have lived about half of their lifetime as refugees, and it took almost a lifetime for them to resettle in the U.S. Therefore, their survival stories impact their perceptions of who they are; they are a group of Hmong people whose identity does not get attached to any country. Next, I present findings on these parents' identity and how identity shapes their perceptions of education and educational support.

Survivors: Second Wave Hmong Parents' Identity

Parents' identity is the fourth theme that emerged from the data that speaks to how their perceptions of who they are play a critical role in their support system for their adolescent children's education. Parents in this study shared that because of their survival experiences, they did not want to and should not get a country attached to their ethnic identity. For instance, although they have lived in the U.S. for about a decade and are naturalized U.S. citizens, they did not think of themselves as Americans or Hmong Americans. They had lived in Laos and Thailand prior to their resettlement in the U.S., but they did not perceive themselves to be Hmong Laotians or Hmong Thais either.

Interestingly, when these parents talked about their support system for their adolescent children's education, they often compared themselves to parents from the aforementioned categories. During their interviews, they defined meanings of each group and created criteria as a checklist to assess which group a person belongs to. The focus here is not the accuracy or inaccuracy of the meaning parents in this study assigned to each of these identity categories.

Rather, the intention is how the perceived differences of these identity categories helped these parents to better understand their own identity. Here, I discuss why these parents did not identify themselves with any of the aforementioned categories that have a country attached to it. Then, I conclude this section with my argument on the analysis of these parents' identity.

American

All of the parents in the study are U.S. citizens. There appears to be an identity conflict on this front. Therefore, I asked for clarification as to why they referenced an "American" identity during my interviews as someone different than them. Remarkably, all of them gave similar explanations. They thought that Americans speak English and have certain physical characteristics. They have access to education, and they have structured childrearing practices, which include educational support for their children.

Nou, for example, expressed her opinion about who Americans are by commenting on certain skills they have and their skin tone: "It's true that I live in America, but Americans are different from me. They are of a different race. They have their language ... They have White skin." Other parents also talked about these physical characteristics and special qualities when prompted to clarify what American is. For instance, when asked what she meant by "Americans," Kia commented, "Americans, they have parents who are literate and who are able to help their children [in school]." Kia thought that Americans are people who can contribute directly to their children's education. It is important to note that Kia had never been to school before resettling in the U.S. and so her experience, or lack of experience, with formal education may have contributed to her view.

In addition, Mai's explanation of Americans included factors such as physical

comparisons and social values. She said:

Americans, they, they are Americans, like those yellow Americans⁵, those White-skinned are Americans. About us, like your mother, your father, and us, we went through the interview process, so we could come live with Americans in America. But the blood in our veins, our blood are real Hmong blood.

To Mai, what distinguishes her from Americans is her cultural and ethnic heritage. These quotes illustrate that the parents in this study thought of Americans as people different from them. Their reasons can be grouped into three categories. One, Americans are people of White European descent or people of a different race. Two, Americans possess certain skills these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents have not yet acquired, such as the English language. Three, Americans engage in different childrearing practices, such as guiding a child through his or her educational journey.

Hmong American

Five out of nine Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents explicitly discussed who Hmong Americans are. For them, Hmong Americans have certain values and experiences that are similar to those of Americans. Although Hmong Americans are also survivors of the Vietnam War, they came to the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. They speak English. They are familiar with the American educational system and thus raise their children in ways that are similar to that of Americans. Hmong Americans are those who engage in mainstream American parenting styles.

PaZoua is one of the parents who provided extensive descriptions of Hmong American.

She distinguished between Hmong and Hmong Americans:

Um, like these Hmong Americans, like they, um, if they're the elderly, then maybe they're like us, too. But um if it's the younger, the younger people who know how to read and write, and know the [English] language, then their support systems for their children

⁵ Yellow or yellow-haired people are common terms among these parents that referred to White-Europeans.

are different, okay. For example, when their children come back home [from school], they will do homework with their children. They will help their children with school-related stuff. They read to their children, teach their children. They have schedules for their children, okay. But us, the parents who recently came here, we don't know how to read or write. We don't know the [English] language, okay. So, we um, we can't do those stuff... Hmong Americans, they came to this country for a long time ago. They have lived here for so long that their attitudes are different from ours. For us, we still behave in a traditional way just like Hmong people always did in the past (laughing). But among those Hmong Americans, the very old people still behave like us! Those who came here when they were older, like my generation, still behave like us. But those who grew up here, those who came here in 1975, 1980, we would call them Hmong Americans, because they came here when they were younger and they have been through the [U.S.] educational system so they know a lot [about schooling]. That's why the ways of how they help their children in school are different from those who came later like us.

PaZoua's definition of a Hmong American is comprised of six factors: 1) they came to the U.S. when they were young, 2) they are literate in English, 3) they provide educational support for their children, 4) they can set aside time to be with their children, 5) they have been in the U.S. for decades, and 6) they are more culturally distanced. She compared herself to Hmong Americans and believed that her identity and support system for children were the direct opposite of Hmong Americans. She also believed that age at the time of resettlement is critical in defining one's identity. To PaZoua, older Hmong parents who came to the U.S. with the first wave are not categorized as Hmong Americans because they could still hold on onto their cultural traditions.

To these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents, Hmong Americans is a cultural group that has been exposed to a certain degree of experiences generalizable to the mainstream American culture. They have adopted more values from Americans into their everyday routine. They have the necessary educational background and skills to help their children succeed in school.

Hmong Thai

Eight of the nine parents referenced Hmong Thai a few times. The term Hmong Thai has two meanings, as it can be used to represent two different objects. The first is a noun and refers to certain geography of northern Thailand. The Hmong Thai region is an area, a village, or a province in Thailand in which there is a big population of ethnic Hmong people. Second, Hmong Thai is used as a pronoun and refers to the ethnic Hmong people who occupy particular regions in northern Thailand.

Similar to the criteria that make one a Hmong American, Hmong Thais are ethnically Hmong but live in northern Thailand. Hmong Thais are Thai citizens. They have secure land to farm and are self-sustained through farming. PaZoua, one of the informants who had lived in northern Thailand with the Hmong Thais, explicitly distinguished herself from Hmong Thais:

So, we went to live in the Hmong Thai [region]...with Hmong Thais. [There], their children get to go to school. They get to learn Thai. So, there's education...just like the U.S. here. Over there, they called it Soon Dek Lek, so it'd be like Head Start in this country, maybe. Hmong Thais have different lifestyles and occupations, okay. They do rice farming and harvest rice just for the family to eat. They plant corn for sell. They garden vegetables for sell. They grow beans for sell. They grow chili peppers for sell. They grow cabbages for sell.

This statement illustrates the lifestyle of Hmong Thais as PaZoua understood. First, having access to a Thai school gives a person a Hmong Thai status. Second, Hmong Thais are different because of their lifestyle and relatively stable occupations; they own land and rely on that land to be self-sustainable. They have options, resources, and tools to support their children and family.

Overall, education is the primary reason these parents drew a line between themselves and these other identity groups. According to these parents, parents from the other three identity groups had access to education when they were growing up, which is a quality that distinguishes

them from parents in this study.

Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents

The parents in this study desired to have a distinctive group identity because of their survival experiences across Laos, Thailand, and the U.S. They referred to themselves as “recent arrivers,” “newcomers,” “Hmong from the camp,” “refugees,” “Hmong refugees,” “stateless people,” and “war survivors.” What these pronouns have in common is vulnerability. They all carry actions of surviving a dangerous situation and transitioning to something new and unfamiliar. Their post-war experience at WTK coupled with their participation in the second wave of Hmong refugee cohort make them a distinctive group of Hmong refugees. How they identify themselves is mainly influenced by their experiences. Also, these parents are already assigning meaning to their identity by referencing their shared refugee experiences, the time they resettled in the U.S., and their strong desire to be educated. Therefore, to acknowledge what these parents have went through and their hope for a prosperous future, I chose to refer to them as Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents. This identity acknowledges that these parents are: one, survivors who are a vulnerable population; two, refugees who recently resettled in the U.S.; three, an ambitious group of parents who, despite having limited to no education, are willing to invest in their children’s education.

Summary of Findings for the First Research Question

Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents describe kev txhawb nqa (support) from the perspective of a vulnerable population. Their refugee experiences and identity as survivors shape how they perceive education as well as their understanding of educational support. Given that the

majority of these parents have very limited experience with formal education, they are using indigenous concepts and metaphors to describe the types of support their children need in order to succeed academically. The use of these figurative languages suggests that these parents are using vocabularies they are familiar with to explain the complexity of education.

Research Question 2

How do Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents contribute to their students' education?

To answer this research question, I analyzed data on parents' discussions of their adolescent children's education. These data included topics such as parents' thoughts about their adolescents' education, ways they communicated with their adolescents about school, and their interactions with their children who enrolled in high school and college. Domain analysis revealed two umbrella themes that emerged from the data. These themes and their sub-categories unveil how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents helped their children to succeed in school. The two themes are: strategic instrumental support and psychological care and will be discussed accordingly.

Strategic Instrumental Support

Strategic instrumental support includes tangible resources such as prizes, presents, or gifts that parents provided their adolescents. These parents believed that positive reinforcement would help their adolescents succeed academically. So, they gave their children material items as rewards for achieving smaller goals that would lead to bigger accomplishments. In general, these seven families provided similar instrumental support for their adolescents. However, the type and quality of these material resources varied from family to family. The diverse family situations discussed in Chapter 3 impacted how these parents' provide kev txhawb nqa (support). Also see

Table 1 for Informant Demographics. The instrumental support these parents provided their adolescent children were cars and monetary currency.

Giving Children Access to a Car

According to these parents, the most important resource they had given to their adolescents in high school and especially in college is a car. Some adolescents had their own car while others shared one with their parents and siblings. Nou and Meng's adolescents were the only ones who did not have a car because they could not drive at the time of the study. A car is, by far, the priciest instrumental support in terms of monetary value though the cars these parents gave to their children were not luxurious cars but were drivable Toyotas. These parents would save the money they received from their income tax return to buy cars for their adolescents. Having access to a car meant that adolescents could commute to school or come back home over weekends or longer breaks if they were in college.

All parents thought cars were a necessity. There were practical and moral reasons these parents perceived cars to be important. Yer and her husband, for instance, bought two cars for their two college children. Yer's daughter went to the college in her hometown. So, Yer thought a car was necessary for her daughter because her family relied on this daughter to pick up the younger siblings after school. Yer's oldest son on the other hand, received a car because Yer wanted him to be independent as he went to school out of town. So, giving him a car was a way to promote independence. With a car, the son was able to come home over the weekends and during breaks. Yer explained about the benefits of having a car as a student:

Yer: We bought him a car so that he will rau siab (be motivated) for school. He will not be nyuab siab (stressed out) about not having access to transportation. [When he did not have a car], wherever he wanted to go, he

couldn't go. He would always need someone to drive him... That was why we bought him that car so it'd be easier for him.

Interviewer: What do you mean by "he'll rau siab (be motivated) for school?"

Yer: The word "rau siab" (motivated) means that, "Since my mother and my father already helped me like this, then...I must focus on school so that my mother and my father will be proud of me." So, this means that he rau siab (is motivated) to go [to school] (laughing).

Yer assumed that a pricier resource such as a car, would not only remove transportation obstacles but also morally motivate her son to perform well in school. Even though he was far away, his car would remind him of his parents at home who worked at physically exhausting jobs just to support him. Yer believed her son would eventually realize her intention and then he would work hard in school. This suggests that what Yer wanted in return was emotional joy when her son succeeded academically.

Moreover, depending on the circumstances of each family, these parents utilized different strategies to budget a vehicle. Families that had more than one stable source of income—although incomes were earned through minimum wage jobs—could afford cars for their adolescents. For example, PaZoua and her husband created a plan they thought would be fair to all of their five children. They agreed to make a down payment of \$5,000 for each child's first car. PaZoua shared, "[I] want my children to have access to a car that they can drive." She also made sure that her children understood why she and her husband could only help with \$5,000. She shared that with the jobs she and her husband had, this amount was the best they could afford. Her children would be responsible for the rest of the cost if a car exceeds \$5,000. With this strategy, her two college students each had already bought their own car with the help from PaZoua as well as with their own personal savings and some personal loans.

On the contrary, families with limited sources of income struggled to get a car for their

adolescent children. Kia's situation is an example of this. Due to her physical health problems, Kia did not work. Her husband was the only one who worked. Kia's family had only one car, but the family could not afford to buy additional cars for the college children to share. They even tried to get some loans, but their loan applications were declined. She shared with embarrassment about how she and her husband were denied a personal loan at a local bank:

We went to buy cars and [expensive] stuff like that [and after examining our household income], they told us, "oh, your income is too low." So, if it's about buying a car and stuff like that then we are not really qualified.

Although Kia recognized that her family needed more than one car, she could not get a loan to buy another car. She felt helpless in her situation and continuously encouraged her children to start saving so that they could buy a car themselves in the future.

Moreover, Dee and Toua also struggled to get their grandsons a car. Their grandsons' mother remarried, so she could not help them as much. These two families dealt with complex sociopolitical circumstances and occasionally had to rely on the assistance of external family members for help. Mai's oldest son, who is Dee and Toua's grandson, received a car from an uncle. Their circumstance illustrates that the support system for adolescents extended beyond the immediate family. Findings for the third research questions will present more in-depth details on this type of support for children's academic success.

Overall, these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents thought that cars were a valuable resource for their high school and college children. Although they were extremely under-resourced, they invented strategies to provide cars for their adolescents. They tried what they could within their power to allow their adolescents access to reliable transportation to ease their commute to school.

Giving Children Monetary Support

Giving children monetary support is the second theme that supports my assertion of instrumental support. There are three main sources of income for these parents: wages from work, SSI, and their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The parents who worked are the younger parents and thus they were able to provide their children with cash on a more regular basis. Parents who received public assistance struggled more with giving cash to their children on a regular basis. But, in general, Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents in this study would give their children cash, because they wanted their children to be free from financial stress so they could focus better in school. With their low-income status, they could only manage to give children between \$5 and \$100, depending on whether parents had a large bill to pay for a particular month. Some of these household bills include rent, car insurance, utilities, food, and others.

PaZoua, for example, tried to give cash to her adolescents on a regular basis. She had three children in college and one in high school. Both she and her husband worked. She explained why she gave her children spending money, “We don’t want them to nyuab siab (worry) about money problems and problems like these. We [the parents], will txhawb (support) them... We can only txhawb (support) them...in terms of financial resources like that.” PaZoua recognized that her adolescents also had financial stress. So, she typically set aside a small sum of cash as spending money for her adolescent children. She believed giving cash to children would eliminate their financial stress so they could focus more in school.

Unlike the parents who worked full-time, parents who received public assistance gave minimal cash to their children or grandchildren and were less predictable. For instance, Dee

shared that her grandsons knew about her financial crisis so normally the grandsons would not expect monetary support from her. Occasionally though, they would ask her for money:

Before my grandsons got a job at Nenano, they would come to me and asked me to give them \$10 or \$20. I would ask them, “why don’t you ask your mother? Doesn’t your mother have money?” They would say, “I already asked but she didn’t give me.” Then I would get my wallet and see how much I have in my wallet. If I have \$5, I would give them \$5. If I have \$10, I would give \$10. If I have \$20, I would give \$20. But now that they work, they don’t come asking for money from me as often anymore. They know that even if they ask me, I don’t have money either.

Dee’s financial situation limited how often and how much she could contribute financially to her grandsons’ education. To help with this financial hardship, she encouraged her grandsons to work part-time. As an elderly woman who did not speak English, Dee’s phonetic use of Nenano refers to McDonalds, where her grandson worked part-time to earn some spending money.

Furthermore, there is a voice that diverges from the majority of these parents. Mai’s husband passed away not too long after her family moved to the U.S. The death of her previous husband left her with five young children to raise. Mai’s social ties and family structures became complicated after she remarried into a different patrilineal clan than her previous husband’s clan. Thus, she and her children were faced with complex socio-political issues when it came to supporting her children of different fathers. So, she could not contribute much to her sons from her previous husband. Her minimal contribution to her oldest sons was because she had to engage in the socially accepted norms of a patrilineal society and support her current clan.

Ultimately, these uneven distributions of resources to her children negatively impacted her relationships with them, especially with her oldest son, Leng. Because of this dilemma of unfair distributions of resources, her son would defy her and limited his contact and communications with her. For instance, instead of meeting Mai’s expectations of succeeding academically, her son prioritized his social life. Mai shared:

Because he spends too much time going out. He has grown up now and he has started to make friends who like to go out a lot. So, it is hard to talk to him now because he's less obedient. Since he started to go out, his grades are no longer in good shape anymore. This is what I worry about.

Mai's son did not receive the support he needed from Mai so he sought his peers for emotional, social, and instrumental support. Mai's case shows just how the absence of resources from a parent can be detrimental to the parent-child relationship.

Overall, family dynamics played an important role in parents' ability to provide instrumental support for their adolescents' education. Children from a family where both parents worked received better-quality resources than their counterparts who grew up in a family where only one or neither parents worked. Nonetheless, the parents in this study perceived that both material and monetary resources were important for their children's academic journey. Given their low-income, these parents engaged in strategic planning so they could provide resources to children.

Psychological Care

Psychological care is the second umbrella theme that unveils how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents contributed to their adolescent children's education. Psychological care was the most predominant theme that emerged from across all interview data in this study. When asked about their adolescents' education, these parents frequently stated that psychological care was the most critical factor in helping their adolescents succeed academically. There are three interwoven categories of psychological care that parents in this study provided their adolescents: helping adolescents search for academic motivation, providing emotional support, and promoting perseverance and psychological strength. These themes will be discussed respectively, and sub-

categories will be presented where applicable.

Helping Adolescents Search for Academic Motivation

Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents guided their adolescents' search for academic motivation by reminding them of who they are and where they come from. In general, adolescents explore various experiences and develop their identity, and these adolescents were no exception. The uniqueness of children of these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents', however, is that they were also exploring the possibility of their professional career despite their non-traditional educational background. These adolescents did not grow up speaking English, and while some had attended elementary school in Thailand, others had never attended school before coming to the U.S. So, these children themselves also have educational background similar to their parents.

What is intriguing is that at the time of this study, these families had only lived in the U.S. for about a decade. Yet, they already had children in high school and college. These families had lived in the U.S. long enough to be able to navigate their daily routine, but not long enough to navigate the larger social and institutional systems, including the educational system. So, when their children struggled in school, they would turn to their parents for both counsel and comfort. These parents, then, would be responsible for caring for their adolescents and making sure they go back to school and graduate.

Specifically, these parents shared that from time to time, their adolescents in college would have doubts about their academic skills and the ability to succeed in certain classes. So, these parents would help boost their adolescents' sense of self-efficacy and help them search for academic motivation so they can persevere in school. In responding to their adolescents'

disclosure about academic struggles, these parents typically shared their own personal experiences of struggles and how they overcame obstacles. They also regularly reminded their adolescents about their family background and how their family had always managed to survive the most doubtful circumstances. They hoped their personal stories would empower their children to find a way out of a challenging situation. They had high hopes and embedded lessons about how to be resilient when responding to their children's struggles.

For example, Kia had told her children why she could not go to school when she was in Southeast Asia: "I lived the rural area and we didn't have a school. That's why I didn't know where to go to school. That's why I'm ruam (not educated). That's why I've been txom nyem (poor) my entire life." She wanted her children to know that education was a privilege when she was growing up. She associated her lack of education with being financially unstable and hoped her children would see the negative consequences of not being educated.

Later in the conversation with me, Kia stated, "Because we, the old generation, is illiterate, it should motivate Hmong children to do well in school to compensate for the suffering the parent generation as a whole has been through." This quote points out two values. First, Kia wanted her children to know about their parents' history and used it as a source of motivation to achieve in school. Second, Kia believed that a parent's suffering would be worthwhile when a child succeeds in life. This is because succeeding in life means that the child has engaged in reciprocity with the parent.

Other parents in this study also told their adolescents about similar life experiences. They talked about their lack of cultural capital and their limited English proficiency. Their tools for surviving in an agricultural society in Southeast Asia does not transfer to the market in the U.S. Consequently, they could not contribute to their adolescents' education. They talked about the

skills deemed necessary for transitioning to the informational era in the U.S. They also discussed the barriers they encountered without these skills. They encouraged their adolescents to work harder in school, so that they would not struggle later in life. Kia shared how she helped her adolescents find academic motivation:

[I tell them] to rau siab (be focused) on school. Because we are really ruam (lacking education). We don't know [about schooling]. We don't know anything, so we can't tell them anything. Whatever they do, they have to tsoo (work real hard) themselves... Us, the parents cannot help them. They should use this situation to make them mob siab (persevere), so that they will not ruam (lack education) like us... We took them here [to the U.S.] so that they can [go to school] and rau siab (be focused) on their studies so one day they are capable of standing on their own. So, one day they won't txom nyem (be poor) and won't have to work at a job that is physically draining like we do... [I want them] to mob siab (persevere) for their studies.

Kia linked her background of not having formal education to her current life situation where she struggled to survive day by day. Because she lacked education, she was not able to help her children. She wanted her life to be an example of what lives could be like if her children do not have the minimum level of education in the U.S. Her intention was not to frighten her children but rather to motivate them to thrive in school. Turning tragedies into opportunities was how these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents help their adolescent children search for academic motivation

Providing Emotional Support

My research data show that parents who had more children matriculate in college tended to provide emotional support for their children more. Emotional support occurs when a parent comforts a child by using words of encouragement and compliment. Although this is an important type of support, only three parents explicitly reported engaging in this form of support. Compared to the rest of the parents, these three parents had the most children attending a

university at the time of the study. Each of them had at least three children in college while the rest of the other parents had more children in high school.

The three parents who had more children enrolling in college shared that they would verbally encourage their adolescents to continue to do their best in school despite struggling academically. For most of the time, their children would encounter challenges such as struggling with a class or not doing well on tests. When they learned about their children's struggles, they boosted their children's academic self-efficacy by focusing on children's strengths and complimenting them on their previous achievements. These verbal compliments were meant to validate their children's ability to succeed in school. A quote from Kia is an illustration of how these parents remind their children of their capability in academic:

Sometimes I praised them too. I told them, "to be truthful, you kids are very capable because for American [students], they have their mothers and fathers who went to school and are able to help them. And some of the [American students] are not as good as you. We, [the parents] are ruam (uneducated) and we cannot even help you with anything, but you are very capable. So, you're the most talented students and are number one." I do compliment [my children] like this (laughing).

By comparing her adolescents to American students, Kia does two things: one, she acknowledges that schooling is not easy; two, she focuses on her children's strengths. She was intentional when complimenting her children especially when they were struggling in school.

Telling her children that they are the top students gave them motivation to persevere.

Moreover, PaZoua was another parent who explicitly recounted how she provided emotional support for her children who enrolled in college. She described how she normally engaged in a conversation with her adolescent children who struggled in school:

We cannot offer them any ideas related to their studies... When they are really nyuab siab (overwhelmed) and they say, "I'm really nyuab siab (overwhelmed)," and uh, "schooling is really hard" like these, then we just, we just support them by saying, "don't be. Don't nyuab siab (be overwhelmed). Just continue to rau siab (be focused) on your

schooling, then you can do it!” We can only support them psychologically like that.

PaZoua gave her children emotional support by staying positive. Focusing on what her children could do would allow them to be optimistic about their ability to succeed in school. PaZoua also believed that what she does is considered a type of psychological support for her children.

The third parent who talked about emotional support was Yer, because she helped her son through a difficult time at school. Her son was recently terminated from his part-time job on campus. He believed that racial prejudice played a role in this incident. Losing his part-time job negatively impacted him because it elicited all types of negative emotions. Consequently, he was unable to focus on classes and considered withdrawing from school. Since this incident, Yer has had numerous conversations with him and showed him that she cared. She revitalized him by convincing him to believe in himself and his potential. She gave him the confidence to go back to school by helping him to work through his emotions. Yer explained what it meant to *txhaw nqa* (support) an adolescent in school, especially in the midst of a catastrophe:

If you [as a parent] don't have a support system and [when] they tell you about their situations and you don't know what to say back to them, then you'd say, "oh, that's fine. Just let it go. If you can't continue schooling anymore, you can just forget about it. Go find a job and just get married." Then, this shows that you don't even help them at all. You don't even *txhawb* (support) them at all. Instead, you are grabbing their feet and pulling them away to make them fall from their journey to success. So, one day if they are not educated, then you are at fault...When they are really *nyuab siab* (overwhelmed) and they come to you for a discussion, they come to you to tell you [about their situation], you must be optimistic. You must teach them and make them realize, "oh, it must be [like] that!" Then, they will go back to school again. Then, they'll overcome that difficult time so that they can finish their studies, come find a job, and prepare for their future.

To Yer, a parent's words can determine a child's future. She believed that when an adolescent is struggling, a parent should know the right words to say to revitalize the child. She believed that *kev txhawb nqa* (support) is comprised of prioritizing an adolescent's emotions. She validated

his stress of losing a part-time job, but then she focused more on how he could move on from this incident by focusing on school. She proudly shared that her support system worked because her son “went back to school after a series of conversations with him.”

The ways Yer helped her son with going back to school instead of withdrawing from college indicated that she used similar strategies to untwine threads that have been mistakenly sewed onto a piece of cloth. Metaphorically, her son’s situation is the wrongly sewed thread on a cloth. Her continuous communications with her son about what would be the best action for him to take was like the process of figuring out what is the actual mistake on the piece of cloth and how to undo it. Her son’s decision to return to school symbolized the success of undoing of the mistake and learning from it to move forward with one’s learning progress.

Overall, Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents who explicitly reported providing emotional support for their adolescent children did so only in specific contexts. Emotional support seems to be reserved for when adolescent children were really struggling and needed to make a clear-cut decision about their education. These parents’ reservation to engage in emotional support—mainly in the form of verbal compliments—showed their cultural value of being humble. That value played a role in how they provided psychological support for their adolescent children. However, some these parents stepped outside of their cultural norms to provide direct emotional support when necessary.

Promoting Perseverance and Psychological Strength

Perseverance and psychological strength were qualities that Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents instilled in their adolescent children as a way to support their education. Parents believed that having these qualities would help a child with achieving both short- and long-term

goals. There are two sub-categories for this theme: delayed gratification and resilience. These categories of psychological strengths are closely related domains because they can influence and impact one another.

Delayed gratification. It is important to note here once again that these Second Wave Among Refugee Parents' families lived under the poverty line. Given their struggle with financial hardship, their children were tempted to find a full-time job right after high school graduation. Some of their children would also want to work part-time while enrolling in school full-time. To make sure their adolescent children go to college and continue to focus in school, these parents promoted the delay of gratification by encouraging them focus on their long-term goals for their life.

To help their adolescent children understand the importance of delay of gratification, these parents often presented their children with two scenarios. One, if children decide to solve their families' financial hardships, the best thing they could do is to work full-time at a labor-intensive job like their parents. This is because a high school diploma or no diploma at all would only allow one to work at physically exhausting jobs without good benefits. Two, a college degree would help one to get a better paying job where the job is not as labor intensive. Therefore, it was worthwhile for children to get a college degree despite their financial hardships.

Additionally, their strong association of education with a better future made them regularly remind their adolescents to focus on school and to not let financial stress steer them away from attaining a college degree. Instead of wanting children to work and contribute financially to their family, these parents consistently reminded their children to think about their long-term goals for their life and career. They spoke assertively that successfully earning a

degree would be the only way to assure a better future because it would be a long-term solution to their financial stress. For example, PaZoua shared about how she encouraged her adolescents to stay focus in school:

I would tell my children that...although we, the parents, are not literate and cannot help, help them with their homework, we will use our physical strength and energy to...tsoo (work real hard) [at] companies to exchange for [money]...so that they can get a car. We will take care of these. We do all these for them just so that they will rau siab (be focused) in school. So that they will be not be nyuab siab (overwhelmed) about not having spending money. [Otherwise,] they will start looking for jobs and don't want to study like that.

This quote points out the importance of financial resources. Without a reliable source of financial support, the children of these parents would not thrive in college. To prevent her adolescents from dropping out of college, PaZoua and her husband provided regular spending money for their children. Making sure her adolescent children finished their college studies instead of working full-time was how PaZoua promoted delay of gratification.

These parents expressed significant concerns that children would not succeed in school because of financial hardships. Many of them repeatedly stated that, “if children drop out of school, their future would be a repeat of what the parents had gone through. And, that is a life with financial instability.” Due to these concerns, Yer would tell her college children to keep up with their studies while she provided them with financial support. She recalled what she had told her children:

[They said], “I don't have spending money. I'll find a job and just work”...[And I said], “about the money problem, you don't have to work and it will be just fine. Just stay focused on your school. I will work. Whatever [money] I make, I'll give it to you to spend.” So, this is a way to show that I txhawb (support) [them].

Yer's concern is another illustration of the risks of dropping out of college for these students from low-income families. To combat this struggle, parents in study felt the need to provide

financial resources despite their low-income status so their adolescent children could continue to thrive in school.

Resilience. Resilience emerged from the data as the second sub-category of perseverance and psychological strength. Resilience refers to children's ability to thrive in school despite being vulnerable for academic failure or drop out. These Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents knew that their adolescent children were at risk for dropping out of school due to two main reasons: the lack of financial resource and the lack of proper academic support. With the limited resources they had and their own understanding that resilience would help children to succeed in learning a new skill, these parents helped their adolescent children to develop qualities such as patience, hard work, concentration, and most importantly of all, the ability to learn from mistakes. These parents believed that their adolescents would succeed academically once they understand that hardships and mistakes are a part of the learning process. Clearly, the qualities these parents believed to be helpful for adolescents' academic success were the same qualities they deemed necessary to untwine threads.

The belief that hardship is a part of growing and acquiring new skills was elaborated by the vast majority of these parents. Among them is PaZoua; she believed that the process of attaining a degree could not be accomplished without being resilient. She explained how she taught her adolescents to develop the psychological strength of resilience:

I told my children, "schooling is not easy. It's something that's really difficult. If it's just as easy as one expects, then every single person would [have a degree]. Schooling is hard and one must have a realistic goal in order to keep going and reaching that goal. So, if you have a goal, [it] doesn't matter how difficult it is, [you] just keep on moving toward the goal." This is what I said [to them].

PaZoua strongly believed that if her adolescents persevered, they would overcome their struggles. She also mentioned that motivation, goal setting, and ambition are factors that

contribute to academic success. She further shared what she had told her adolescents in college:

So you must rau siab (be focused). I as a mother, we as [your] mother [and] father, even though we are not educated, we cannot help [you] with your homework, we cannot help you with anything, but we will use our physical strengths to find food and resources for you. We can go tsoo (work real hard) at companies...[to exchange for money, and] to use the money to buy food and resources for you.

PaZoua continued without a pause:

So, you will not starve [and] will not ntshaw (long for) [other's] resources... So that you will get cars to drive. And we will take care of these. We will do these things for you and so you should just rau siab (be focused) only at studying. So that you will not nyuab siab (be overwhelmed) because you don't have spending money. So that you will have to go work and will not study anymore like this and that. So that you will not nyuab siab (be stressed out) about financial problems. We will, we will support you."

PaZoua's statement revealed several types of support she and her husband provided for their adolescents. First, she acknowledged that she could not provide direct academic support for her adolescents. However, she did not focus on what she was lacking. Instead, she chose to focus on the realistic, practical types of support she could give her adolescent children. She provided them with money, food, and transportation.

These parents also used metaphors when explaining resilience to convey its importance. They believed that persistence in the presence of a challenge is a sign of resilience. Kia, for instance, disclosed on the methods by which she taught her adolescents to persist:

So, this is what I normally tell them: "[You] must mob siab (persist) at reading and mob siab (persist) at studying... [If you do, then] it's like a path that they have already tho (paved) for yourself. The path might not be as clean and smooth yet. So, if you mob siab (persist) and continue to study, then it will become a cleaner and clearer path... But if [you] are not mob siab (persistent) at studying, then the grass will only continue to overgrow over the path you are walking on," yeah.

Kia used the metaphor of "paving a path" to convince her adolescents that through exposure to the materials, they would gradually understand the content of what they are learning. And, being familiar with the contents will help them succeed in their class.

Moreover, knowing the specific details of what adolescent children were struggling with helped these parents with approaching and talking to their children about resilience. For instance, before Yer could have a serious conversation with her son about going back to school, she needed to know what exactly had happened. After a series of conversations with her son, she learned that he had lost his student job on campus and was struggling to maintain good grades. During my interview with Yer, she shared about how she comforted her son and made sure he would be mentally prepared to go back to school:

When they said they're stressed out, I would say, "Don't be stressed out"... When they said "School is so hard and I can't do it anymore. I am giving up"... I would tell them, "Schooling is hard but you have to be patience. And you must really rau siab (be focused) at keeping up with your schoolwork. You must rau siab (be focused)... And I told [my son] not to nyuab siab (be overwhelmed) so that he would reconsider his decision [and go back to school] ... "Be optimistic," [I said]. So, he was like "Okay, if my mother and father tell me this, then I must go back to school." Then, he went back to school.

For Yer, being focused, patient, and optimistic was critical for adolescent children to persist in school when they are faced with challenges. In this particular context, patient means one should not make decision without carefully thinking about the pros and cons of dropping out of school. Patience refers to the need to discuss one's struggles with a trusted person prior to making a decision that one would regret at a later time.

To conclude, these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents promoted perseverance and psychological strengths by encouraging their adolescents to delay gratification and be resilient. They sought long-term solutions when resolving problems related to their socio-economic status. They helped adolescents understand the benefits of delaying gratification by focusing on school and graduating with a college degree despite challenges. They talked to their adolescents about how they could become resilient. To these parents, resilience meant that one should not be afraid of the unknown, but instead one should be optimistic.

Summary of Findings of the Second Research Question

The types of support these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents provided their adolescents were framed from within their own cultural framework. They believed that both instrumental support and psychological care are critical types of support for helping a child to succeed academically. Although they were working-class parents, they managed to provide adolescents with material resources, such as vehicles and spending money. To them, these resources would prevent their adolescents from dropping out of school. They believed that if adolescents could have access to these types of fundamental instrumental support, they would persist with schooling.

In addition, these parents also cared for their adolescents' psychological well-being. When their adolescents encountered challenges, they motivated them by providing emotional support and guidance to overcome obstacles. To do so, they encouraged their adolescents to look for long-term solutions with a goal of graduating from college. They believed that if adolescents could delay gratification and stay in school, they would finish their degree. In the long run, they would be able to find a better paying job with good benefits for them and their own family. These parents also helped their adolescents to understand what it means to be resilient so they could continue to thrive in school in the presence of obstacles.

Research Question 3

What do Hmong American parents perceive to be specific roles they play in their children's journey to college?

To address this question, I analyzed data on the various responsibilities that Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents and their adolescent children engaged in on a daily basis. Findings on

their roles and responsibilities often derived from impromptu questions about the tasks that I saw them perform when I went to their home to conduct the interviews. Some of these questions include:

1. What is your daily routine like?
2. I noticed that you were _____ (fill in the blank with activity) when I walked in, can you please tell me what were you doing?
3. What do your adolescent children typically do when they get home from school?
4. Now that it is almost fall, what does your family normally do before your children go back to school?

These questions along with some of the semi-structured interview questions that I prepared in advance aimed at asking parents to discuss in detail the specific roles they play in their children's academic success. Two main themes emerged from the data that unveil the roles these parents partook in order to support their adolescent children: adapting to changing circumstances and networking with communities to maximize resources for children's academic success.

Adapting to Changing Circumstances

Adapting to a changing socio-ecocultural niche is the first umbrella theme that emerged from the data when Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents talked about the roles they played in their adolescents' education. They had to adapt to their changing socio-ecocultural niche to provide academic support for their adolescents although they had their own dreams and goals. Six of the nine parents in this study wanted to attend school, graduate with a degree, and get a decent job in the U.S. However, due to family obligations, they had to sacrifice their personal

dreams. They shared that if they worked instead of going to school, it would benefit their adolescents' education. These parents also recounted how their decision making and relationships with their community members played a role in their students' educational journey, which are the sub-themes that I discuss next.

Prioritizing Adolescent Children's Education Instead of One's Professional Development

Although parents in this study enjoyed schooling in the U.S., they had to discontinue their schooling to prioritize their children's need. This was especially true for the six younger parents in this study. These parents reasoned that they could not go to school when their children are also in school; doing so would be consider unresponsive of their children's education because it would take away their ability to provide monetary resources for children. These parents also shared that they were "really overwhelmed and stressed out" when they attended school due to family obligations. When they attended school, they only worked part-time and that did not help with their financial hardship. So, if they continued to attend classes, they would not be able to contribute financially to their family, especially their adolescents' education. Thus, these parents decided to drop out of their classes and focused on providing resources for their children instead.

To illustrate this process of decision making, I present a quote from PaZoua who elaborated on why her family was struggling with financial resources by comparing her life at the refugee camps with her current situation in the U.S.:

[I] thought, "ohhhh, ever since I came to this country, I've been so nyuab siab (stressed out) because this country is different from Thailand," right. In Thailand, we were txom nyem (poor) only because we had no money...to buy vegetables and rice and that was it. We didn't...have to pay rent, didn't have to pay for a car, didn't have to pay for insurance, this and that. We didn't have any of these in Thailand.

She continued explaining why she would have to prioritize her children's need:

But, in this country, it's difficult because if you get here and you don't have a car, whether you're going to work or anywhere, you need a ride. So, if you don't have a car to drive, you can't go. You can't work. You cannot get out [of the house] to go anywhere. And, you can't take care of your own family. You must have a car to drive. And, after you buy a car, you have to buy car insurance, right? Not only that, but you have to have life insurance for your family, too, in case one is ill and something happens, and you become *txom nyem* (poor) and you have no money and no help from anyone, right... And, then you have electricity bill, water bill, and bill for your house, too, [and you] must pay these, too. So, it seems like there were 2 or 3 things that made me really *nyuab siab* (overwhelmed) right... Because I already have a family, right, so I was really *nyuab siab* (overwhelmed) and so honestly, I didn't do real well in school.

PaZoua's financial stress derived from the insufficient financial resources to cover just the basic needs for her family's survival. In the U.S., money is needed for nearly everything. With a limited income, she was overwhelmed by all of her bills. PaZoua's stress was significant to the point where it negatively impacted her own academic performance. Consequently, she decided to focus on providing financial support to her family instead of continuing her own schooling. She further explained:

If I go to school...surely I would get something [out of it] and would surely know more. But, if I go to school, [then] I would not have time to work and earn money [and support] my children financially. So, my children would be *txom nyem* (poor). Whatever they *ntshaw* (are longing for), they would not get it.

To PaZoua, meeting her adolescents' needs was more important than achieving her own personal goals of going to school.

In addition, the younger father in this study also experienced similar challenges as the younger mothers. Because of his family's economic concerns, Meng withdrew from school to prioritize his family's needs. He explained the sources of stress for him in an emotional voice:

[I have] a lot of children, and I have to eat, too, and my wife and my children will have to eat, too. So, that led me to make the decision that [although] my education is something that is very important to me, but if I don't have a wife, if I don't have any children, then it's okay. But, I already have a wife and children, and I have a lot of stomachs to fill. And, I need money to pay for our rent, too. So, I had to quit [school] and went to look for a job instead.

Meng thought that if he were single, he would have a higher chance of succeeding in school because he would not be obliged to care for others. However, since he is married and has seven children, he felt he must prioritize the needs of his children.

Although these parents had stopped going to school years before this study took place, they shared that education is very important and they would want to go back to school someday.

When I asked Yer why she could not go to school, she explained in an emotional voice:

Yer: I don't go to school anymore (pause). But, I really like [school]. I really, really like it more than anything else. My schooling is comparable to, as good as, [or] maybe it's even better than a girlfriend or my boyfriend [in a romantic relationship]. Yea, but it was necessary [for me to stop schooling] and [because] I'm old now. So, I would rather be home and help my children. So, I would rather quit school. But my heart still aches and cries for my education.

Interviewer: What do you mean your "heart still aches and cries" for your education?

Yer: It means that I also want to be knowledgeable and educated, yea. I want to know, too, so I will not be asking others for help. And, if I look at any types of documents, I'll know what they are, so it'd not be that hard for me. So, [this is why] I really, really like school and have fallen in love with schooling. But, there's no one to help me, so it doesn't matter how much I like it I can't do anything at all... What I like and what I ntshaw (long for) is the opportunity to go to school... The only thing I ntshaw (long for) the most in my life is my education. I think to myself, "only if I could transform, I would transform into a baby and start all over just so that I could go to school." That's why in my life and my dreams are all about my education. That's it. That's what I ntshaw (long for) the most.

For Yer, being educated would not only give you more career opportunities, but it would also allow you to be independent. It is these ideas of independence and self-reliance that she desired. However, not being able to fulfill her own personal dreams resulted in such complicated feelings that she had to use the metaphor of a romantic partner to explain her desire for schooling. This metaphor was not to romanticize education but to represent a more complex thought. Yer was faced with a moral dilemma of having to choose between her family and her own professional

training. Due to the competing needs of her family, she eventually decided to sacrifice her education.

Additionally, it is important to know that Yer was knowledgeable about the types of curricula offered at the community college in her town. This not only shows that she was thinking about going back to school but was actually planning on matriculating. I was impressed by how informative she was about the schedules of the two summer sessions. She explained:

They teach every [summer]. This summer, they teach only until Thursdays [out of the five weekdays]. They don't teach on Fridays. But, for winter [break], they teach all five days. But, if you only go for a day, they won't let you do that. If you only go for one day, then you [will be] a student who does not do well in school, a person who does not do well in school. So, they will not be satisfied with you. [So], you can't go... You have to, at this level, if you're only starting with level 1 or level 2, then you can skip 2 to 3 days [per week], and they will let you pass. But, when you start level 3 and 4, then they will not let you skip anymore. They want you to go everyday... For each month, they will allow you to skip 2 days of school. But, if in a week, you go for 3 days and skip 2 days, you go for 4 days and skip 1 day, then in a month...you would have skipped more days than they allow. So, they will not like you. If your schedule doesn't allow, then you should just not go because even if you go, you won't have time to go every day, right. So, you'll have to skip a lot so they'll think of you as a bad student.

Yer had sought alternative ways to continue her education, but her work schedule did not match with the class schedules being offered. Yer's English proficiency was more advanced.⁶ She was aware of the intensity of language training and the level of dedication needed to succeed academically. She emphasized the value of hard work and recognition of her efforts, but she knew that with her work schedule, it would be impossible to attend summer and winter classes.

Overall, these parents believed that a role they had to play in order to contribute to their adolescents' academic success was to sacrifice their own education. Their decisions to withdraw from school were a deliberate and emotional process. Their emotional states were prevalent in both their verbal and non-verbal communications, because when talking about their education

⁶ It is worth mentioning that Yer was the parent who preferred the English version of the informed consent form.

many of them lowered the volume of and softened their voices. Nevertheless, these parents thought that supporting their adolescent's education was worthy of sacrificing their own education. In other words, these parents wanted to invest in their children's education because they wanted their children to have access to better career opportunities in the future.

Networking with Communities to Maximize Resources for Children's Academic Success

Support from community members was explicitly discussed by four of the seven families or six of the nine parents. These parents formed relationships with other Hmong families in the communities, and their social networks were advantageous for their adolescents' education. Not only their social network provided them with a sense of belonging but also a source of support where they could rely on each other. These types of relationships and reciprocity indicate that the sources of support for adolescent children of these parents extended beyond the immediate family. The main benefit of these social networks is that it allowed these families to maximize resources for their adolescents' education despite their working-class economic status.

The reciprocity between Meng and Nou's family and Yer's family is a pronounced example that these networks are mutually beneficial. Yer's son, Phong, attended a university out of town and lived with Meng and Nou's family. Meng and Nou gave Phong a room, and in return, they asked him to watch over their children when they went to work. Nou elaborated:

He lives with us [and] he helps us watch over our kids so it's like we help each other. He sleeps in a bedroom downstairs. So, we gave him the key to that bedroom... When he comes back [from school], he'll be in his room. But our kids really, really like him. So, they normally go to his room and stay with him all the time. [My little sons] normally sleeps with [Phong] in his room. They don't want to sleep with us.

Phong was a first-generation college student from a low-income family. On the surface level, this example illustrates that living with relatives helped him save money. However, the benefits Nou

emphasized extend far beyond financial purposes. She highlighted the social reciprocity that would eventually strengthen both family's social ties. Living with relatives out of town gave Phong a chance to establish relationships with his cousins. At the same time, Phong served as a role model for Meng and Nou's younger children as he was the first and only college student the younger cousins knew. The mutual support system between these two families would also strengthen the relationships of future generations. Nou further stressed that the cost of living with Nou's family was not a serious issue:

We told [Phong's parents] that [Phong] is still in school and he does not have money so he can just live with us and doesn't have to pay anything. But, his mom and them did not accept [our offer]. So, they would send us like \$100 a month to help us pay for our house bill.

Although Nou did not expect Phong to pay rent, Phong's parent helped Nou pay a small portion of their monthly bill. Overall, Nou thought that this living arrangement was advantageous to both families.

Moreover, Phong's mother revealed that her family has known Meng and Nou's family for a long time: "Yea, [we] knew each other from [Thailand]...that's why there's this thing that makes me trust them and uh, I entrust them enough to have my kid lives with them." I asked her to clarify what she meant by "trust" and "entrust." She rushed to answer before I could finish my question:

Trust them means, means that I already know that they have good hearts. I already know that they are people with nice hearts. So, if my kid lives with them, they would be able to help me watch over him, too, and uh they will like my kid, too. There would not be issues related to them disliking my kid. This is the reason I trust them.

Yer's explanation revealed that the support from community members was not only important but also multifaceted. The decades-long relationship between Meng and Nou's and Yer's families played a role in this social support system. Yer had known Meng and Nou's family long

enough to entrust them with the responsibility of helping to raise her son.

Additionally, Yer assumed that living with their cousins would give Phong a home-like environment:

Whatever he does it seems like he, if there's no one living with him, then he can't really stay at home. So, [I] think that if he lives with our cousins, then there will be a few people [living together]. So, when he goes to school and comes back, there are people at home. So, the house would not be a cold place for him. Otherwise, when he comes back home, he would not want to stay home. Then he would be like, "oh I don't want to stay home," and then he'd leave to go somewhere else.

Yer thought that the social interactions between her son and the cousins benefited her son because he went to school away from home. The social support from the cousins was needed to help ease the son's homesickness. Hence, living with their cousins seemed to be the best option.

Furthermore, other adolescents also benefited from their parents' social network. Dee and Toua's grandson also received support from their community. At the time of the study, one of Dee and Toua's grandsons was about to become a college freshman in the fall. They knew they could not help him with his academic expenses using their SSI income. So, they happily accepted contributions from friends, families, and members of the communities. Dee spoke slowly in her soft and calming voice about the support her family had received from the community:

[Leng's] uncle has a car that he doesn't use anymore so he gave it to [Leng]. He said that there is something, hmmm what is that thing called? I don't know, but something about the car is broken. Leng still needs to fix it but he said he doesn't have money yet.

Although the car Leng's uncle gave him needed to be fixed, it was an important contribution.

Having a car meant that Leng would be able to commute to college in the fall as well as take his grandparents to their regular doctor's visits.

Although Dee was excited about the donation, Leng's mother, Mai, was not. My second

interview with Mai was after I had met with Dee and Toua. So, I was able to ask her about her opinions of this donation. She told me:

Yea, [Leng's] uncle from his...clan [gave him a car]. [He] gave [Leng] a car that's not even working. He still gave it [to Leng]. [Leng] will [inaudible], his grandmother will take it to some Hmong people so they can help fix it. [I am] not really sure what's wrong with the car.

Mai did not know what was wrong with the car, but she knew it was not drivable. She seemed offended that Leng's uncle gave him a car in such a poor condition. Although Leng received a free car, he needed to fix the car, and both his grandmother and mother expected him to pay to get his car fixed.

Even though support from community members was an important contribution, the quality of support varied. When comparing Phong, who was raised in a more traditional family, to Leng, who grew up in a family with complex sociopolitical structures where his mother remarried, it is clear that Phong received support of a higher quality. Leng, on the other hand, received lower quality support, whether it was instrumental or social. His mother and grandparents struggled to meet his needs. While this disparity is noteworthy, the extent to which the quality of support from community members impacts an adolescent's education lies beyond the scope of this research.

Overall, parents' networking with their community members plays a vital role in the success of their adolescent children. Their social support system allowed these parents to look after the adolescents in their communities, to protect, and to help the adolescents thrive in poverty. These parents' social network was essential because it helped them to explore possible ways to support adolescents.

Summary of Findings for the Third Research Question

To conclude, the roles that parents engaged in depended on their unique situation, personal background, and social ties. There are two main roles that these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents perceived they engaged in to support their adolescents' education. First, they would prioritize their children's financial need to prevent children from dropping out of school. To engage in this role, the younger parents in this study had to drop out of school themselves in order to work full-time and contribute financially to their adolescents' education. Networking with community members to maximize resources for adolescent children is the second role these parents played. These social networks not only gave them a sense of belongings but also allowed them to engage in mutually beneficial reciprocities so their children could thrive in school.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As an individual who came to the U.S. with the second wave of Hmong refugees, I wanted to find out what resources, if any, parents from my cohort have provided their adolescent children to help with their schooling. I am especially curious if they provided similar resources to those my parents have been providing me. Thus, I conducted an ethnographic study to better understand the cultural concept of *kev txhawb nqa* (support) for academic success of nine Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents. This study focuses on interpreting Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' perceptions of their own support system for their children. As such, this research project took an emic perspective by focusing on these parents' own view of their thoughts and actions. As a cultural insider, I was able to gain access to the rich life stories and daily routine of these parents'. In this chapter I interpret what my research data suggest and relate my research findings to extent research.

Parents Provide Culturally Appropriate Types of Support

Findings of this study point out that there are no discrepancies in parents' supportive behavior and their interpretation of the types of support they provide adolescent children as previous research has claimed (Lee, 2001a; Supple & Small, 2006; Xiong & Lam, 2013). These Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' ways of supporting their adolescents were culturally appropriate. The types of support these parents provided are framed from within their own

cultural model. They acted in culturally appropriate ways that are beneficial for their adolescents' education. Such culturally guided thoughts and practices were shown through the material gifts they give to their adolescents and the ways they interact with them when caring for their children's psychological wellbeing. This included giving adolescent children cars to morally remind them to persevere in college. These parents believe their culturally appropriate ways of supporting their adolescent children will help them to succeed academically, which is to graduate from school and earn at least a bachelor's degree.

Culturally appropriate types of support not only referred to traditional aspects of their culture as previous research found but also the newly added values these parents have adopted and the alterations they have made to their beliefs, values, and practices. For instance, traditionally the Hmong people pride humbleness and consider it inappropriate to praise one's own children. Yet, this research shows that these recent refugee Hmong parents are reassigning values to their cultural norms. They did not make exceptions but accepted that it is culturally appropriate to praise one's own children. This new recognized value allowed these parents to counsel their adolescent children more powerfully in the presence of obstacles.

These Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents believed that the types of support they provided their adolescent children are meaningful. They believed that if their adolescent children struggle in school, they would be able to have empowering conversations with them. They thought that because their children could identify with their life stories and struggles, they could convince children to be optimistic and to believe in the solutions parents suggest. Thus, these parents' use of their life stories as well as a family's history of resiliency are a part of culturally appropriate ways to support children. This is consistent with Lamborn and Moua's (2008) finding that parents rely on culturally appropriate strategies when supporting adolescents.

Moreover, parents' understanding of how learning occurs influenced their perceptions on what types of support they should provide their adolescent children. To them, learning in social and academic settings requires similar qualities, such as persistence, perseverance, and learning from mistakes. Therefore, they sought to instill these psychological strengths in children. They associated learning in academic settings to their own learning experiences in social settings: just as they had to untwine threads numerous times before they could become proficient in embroidering, they believe that learning in academic setting also involves practice and learning from mistakes. Approaching learning with the anticipation of making mistakes is not just a strategy but also a coping mechanism for future failures. This expectation can encourage one to make a second attempt after a struggle.

According to these parents, psychological care is the most important support they can provide as working-class parents to their adolescent children who are faced with multiple risk factors. When they have very little tangible, fundamental resources for their adolescent children, they relied on providing psychological care even more. It is important to keep in mind that the adolescents referenced in this study are also refugees. These adolescents were born in Thailand and had spent half of their lifetime there prior to coming to the U.S. They are from families with low SES, are first-generation college students, and are English learners. These aspects of their identities are risk factors that could potentially hinder them from succeeding academically. Therefore, the parents believed that psychological care is a necessity, because it will allow adolescents to find the strengths to persevere and to succeed in school. Thus, the use of culturally appropriate types of support may be crucial because these adolescents share similar values and experiences as their refugee parents. They may have witnessed how their parents combat obstacles and, therefore, value the types of support their parents offer them. According to these

parents, their support system benefits their children in an environment with limited resources.

These types of support that are framed within their own cultural model has not been previously documented.

Additionally, what is fascinating is that during the process of providing psychological care, these parents believed that they are able to guide adolescents on how to turn tragedies into opportunities. They see adverse experiences and risk factors as sources of motivation. They talked to their children about how to use their vulnerable background as a point of reference to look back and be proud of their academic progress. Parents think that their adolescent children do not misinterpret their reminders about risk factors as harmful stimuli, such as offensive, discouraging, or signs of hopeless. Instead, they believed that they took these reminders as sources of motivation to help them persevere in their studies. The ability to appropriately internalize these reminders as intended requires understanding of cultural values through socialization and social networking as these activities are a part of children's developmental pathways.

Also, turning of adverse experiences to opportunities is consistent with De Torres' (2016) finding that negative life experiences and adversities help one to develop resilience. Resilience may be the most critical asset these parents possess. Being equipped with very little knowledge about higher education couples with their limited access to tangible resources, these parents normally turn to their psychological tool kit to aid adolescents through hardships.

Nonetheless, the actual process of how children psychologically or mentally process reminders of risk factors and their ability to turn these reminders into sources of motivation as intended deserves to be carefully examined as this study focuses only on the parents' own interpretation of the types of support they provide. Also, one needs to be cautious about

discussing how adverse experiences are converted into sources of motivation. These parents' ability to turn adversity into an opportunity does not suggest that all second wave Hmong refugee families and adolescents who grow up with risk factors should be excluded from other valuable types of institutional or systematic supports. Also, this does not imply that adolescents with similar backgrounds will develop resilient skills if they are reminded of any traumatic events. Rather, these results suggest that adolescent children with vulnerable backgrounds have at least the potential to be resilient if proper and effective guidance are provided within the framework of their ecocultural niche (Weisner, 2002) and developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1986). Future studies will need to substantiate how the adolescents respond to and think about parental supports.

Similarly, these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' resilience should not be taken as evidence that they have the ability to survive on their own without resources or assistance. Although they seem to have certain useful coping mechanisms, their memories are full of traumatic events and grief of losing their homes and family members during the Vietnam War. Although they seem to possess psychological strengths in that they strive to support their adolescents' education, they are in need for basic resources to meet the minimum survival standard (Yang, 1997).

Parents Take Agency in Changing Aspects of Culture to Provide Educational Support

In a culture where age and gender social hierarchies define norms, one would expect a clear line between the responsibilities of parents and children. This practice was true for these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents and their families prior to their time in the U.S. However, changes in their daily routine in the U.S. eventually disrupt these social hierarchies. So, these

parents have to take on roles that would traditionally be assigned to adolescents. For instance, they perform most of the house chores instead of assigning them to adolescent children. They believe that doing so would allow adolescents to focus more on school. These parents' desire for children to focus on their schooling suggests that they prioritize education.

Previous research found that the age and gender social hierarchies for the Hmong American community are highly stressed (Duchon, 1997; Grigoleit, 2006; Lee, 2001b; Rick & Forward, 1992; Supple et al., 2010; Symonds, 2003; Vang, 2003; Vang & Flores, 1999; Xiong, & Detzner, 2005; Yang, 1997). However, parents in this study rarely emphasized social hierarchies. Unlike previous research, this study found that these social hierarchies are waning as parents have similar expectations for both sons and daughters. They strive to provide resources for both sons and daughters and do not expect either to engage in household chores or in traditional reciprocity. In the past Hmong people would typically allow sons to go to school while they keep daughters at home to help the family. But, today these parents want their daughters to be just as educated as their sons. Valuing both sons' and daughters' education suggests that these parents are changing their social and cultural beliefs

Besides, these parents take on different roles that do not typically conform to the age or gender hierarchies. Instead of being passive to children's struggle, they strove to provide emotional support. They gave explicit compliments to children instead of waiting for other people to praise their children. They had high expectations that both of their daughters and sons will be educated instead of solely supporting their sons. These expressed supportive behaviors contradict previous findings that Hmong parents in the U.S. are unsupportive of the children (Lee, 2001a; Supple & Small, 2006). These behaviors and standards are newly added values to their cultural traditions and shows that these parents have adopted similar values as western

parents.

Ultimately, their culture is not just about what they share in common or what they know about each other. Their culture is about what they are making, creating, and becoming. Their culture continues to evolve. Nevertheless, it seems that these parents may not even realize that they are the agent who make alterations to their cultural traditions. Not realizing that they are the agent of change does not mean that these parents are behaving inconsistently with their views. Perhaps, these are gradual changes that are happening across families in their community and so these changes could be subtle to them. What these families are experiencing shows that culture is fluid and is constantly evolving as Hall (1990) suggests.

In addition to the de-emphasis of the social hierarchies, reciprocity is also not emphasized by these parents. In the past adolescents would be expected to bring economic resources to their family by engaging in reciprocity (LeVine & White, 1986; Moua & Lamborn, 2010). Yet, the parents in this study did not expect their adolescents to work and financially contribute to their family. This could be because they are moving away from the agrarian model now that their ecocultural niche has changed. They are also interacting with various systems that both directly and indirectly impacting their adolescent children's education. Thus, their new ecocultural niche is more complex now. The fact that these parents are willing to sacrifice their own professional development and continue to serve as the primary source of economic support for their adult children clearly shows that children's reciprocity with parents is either delayed or diminished. Prioritizing their adult children's need indicates that these parents are reevaluating their cultural norms, making changes to their traditions, and adding new values to their culture.

It is possible that because these parents are a unique group of refugees, their expectations of their children are different from other Southeast Asian parents, including parents from the first

wave of Hmong refugees. Nonetheless, the current finding that these parents do not expect their children to give back to them in old age needs to be studied in more depth, because this study included a limited sample size both in terms of number and geography. To look for consistency of this theme that parents do not expect children to engage in reciprocity, future research should include the adolescent children's perspective.

Interestingly however, these parents expected one thing from their children in the future: They hope to gain emotional compensation. They will feel emotionally satisfied once a child successfully graduates from college. Graduating not only marks a rite of passage but, the parents expressed that it makes their suffering worthwhile. Intriguingly, emotional reward is a new value and is what parents want instead of traditional reciprocity. It is this idea of emotional compensation that indicates these parents are thinking more like Western parents regarding childrearing.

Additionally, although these parents are extremely under-resourced, they invest the resources they are able to attain to their adolescents' education. Most of these parents rely on government support programs such as SSI income and EITC money. Consistent with other studies on how extremely poor families spend their EITC money (Barrow & McGranahan, 2000; Mendenhall, Edin, & Crowley, Sykes, Tach, Kriz, & Kling, 2012; Romich & Weisner, 2000), this study shows that these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents have been able to accomplish bigger goals by using their EITC money. However, unlike other recipients of EITC such as African-American, Latino, and White parents, these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents reported that they do not use their EITC money for personal purposes, such as saving it, paying debts, or paying bills (Barrow & McGranahan, 2000; Mendenhall et al., 2012). Instead, they have used their EITC money to exchange for instrumental resources that would motivate their

adolescents to do well in school. What these parents strive to provide their adolescents is beyond making accommodations to incorporate the needs of a child as Bernheimer and Weisner (2007) suggest. These parents prioritize their children's education and willingly engage in actions that would maximize resources for their adolescent children.

Finally, these types of supportive behaviors, valuing education, and changes in cultural practices have not been noted in studies of the Hmong people in the U.S. Hence, my findings add a new perspective to the concept of parental support for academic success. The findings of psychological strengths in particular is a new contribution to the literature on Hmong students in the U.S. who are English Learners and their potential to succeed in higher education.

Concluding Remarks

As a cultural insider, I recognized some of the salient resources these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents provided their children, such as material gifts, cars, and spending money. What was dormant for me were these parents' rationales behind each type of support they provided and the meanings they assigned to specific act of psychological care for their adolescent children. Their creative ways to go beyond the limitation they are faced with to secure the maximum resources possible for their children fascinates me.

Aside from my researcher role, this research project brought to light the unspoken values, ambitions, and dreams my own parents had but were too diminutive for the naïve me to recognize. As I became more knowledgeable of the life experiences of recent refugee parents through the lens of these informants, it has allowed me to reflect more on what meanings my parents could have assigned to the different resources they have provided me, especially those that cost them a year or two of their combined incomes.

As one of the very first graduates of the second wave, I cannot deny that the institutional resources that I have had access to and the advocacy of my teachers, coaches, and mentors have played a significant role in my academic journey. However, I also recognize that there are institutional resources that are not one size fits all. Refugee students will need that extra support to help them navigate the various institutional and bureaucratic systems so they can reach their full potential in school and career.

I have worked closely with underrepresented students, first-generation college students, and students from low-income background. I am aware that although institutions have policies to help these students, not all students will fit into the formula that institutions have created to determine their needs. Not all policies directly benefit these students. My student services experience combined with this research project inform me that more studies must be conducted on the second cohort of the Hmong refugees to unveil how institutions, service providers, and advocates can continue to provide equitable resources for students so they can continue to thrive.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research examined how Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents describe their contributions to their adolescents' education. With a relatively small sample and most informants being mothers, these factors could have formed a perspective that is not as representative of all Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents. So, future research should include a more representative sample. Since this group of parents are unique, this research may not be generalizable to other Hmong parents in the U.S.

Also, this is a qualitative research and used semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method. While this method generated rich data from these parents about their

perspectives on the support systems for their adolescents' education, it could potentially have prevented them from sharing other important aspects of academic support. For instance, it did not produce quantitative data, such as the frequency and amount of resources these parents provided. To examine both the quantity and quality of resources these parents provide, future research should utilize a mixed method.

Additionally, this study only examined the parents' perspective. Future studies should aim at comparing both the parents' and their adolescent children's perspectives to see whether there is consistency in their definition of kev txhawb nqa (support). In other words, researchers should examine whether adolescents perceive their parents' instrumental support and psychological care as critical support from their parents that help them with their academic success. To gain a holistic view of how the support systems that parents provide, future research should also consider conducting a longitudinal study of adolescent children who receive culturally appropriate support from their parents to follow up on the outcomes of their schooling.

Implications

Findings of this research suggest that these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents tried their best within their own power to support their adolescents' academic success. However, their circumstances limited both the quantity and quality of support they can provide. Based on the findings of this study, these parents believed that the most significant obstacle their adolescent children faced was financial hardship. And, financial resources are a type of support that these parents were not able to sufficiently supply. Hence, the highest priority need of these recent refugee Hmong students is financial support.

While these adolescents are likely to be qualified for certain federal student aids such as

grants and student loans to help cover their tuition expenses, these types of aid may not necessarily cover other expenses such as rent, school supplies, food, gas, and miscellaneous fees. Thus, additional financial support is a necessity for these students. Having access to financial support may help prevent these students from dropping out of school. Though, it is noteworthy that this suggestion as well as the following recommendations have not been evaluated for their effectiveness. So, future research should examine the effectiveness of these recommendations.

In addition, although these parents placed a high value on education and prioritize their adolescents' education, they know very little about higher education. This includes the process of applying to college and financial aid. Therefore, advocates who understand their cultural values and educational aspirations may help them understand the U.S. educational system. These parents and their adolescents also may benefit from culturally responsive workshops led by and facilitated in their native language.

Additionally, these parents perceived that it takes patience, persistence, and learning from mistakes to learn a new skill. This concept of learning showed that they value resilience. While this particular perception can help adolescents cope with academic struggles, it might also be helpful to introduce these parents and their adolescents to other learning approaches. This includes introducing these adolescents how to engage in proactive strategies in academic settings and how to seek support available at their institutions.

Moreover, this study revealed that these students told their parents about their academic struggles more than their academic achievements. While these Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents attempted to counsel and comfort their adolescents and help them to be revitalized and go back to school, they are not familiar with concrete strategies that can help their adolescents resolve academic struggles. Thus, besides emotional support, their adolescents' academic

struggles are often left unresolved. So, it is critical to address these students' academic struggles by encouraging them to talk and seek advice from school personnel, such as teachers, professors, and academic advisors.

Last but not least, these parents have a strong desire to go to school in the U.S., especially those in their thirties and forties. So, institutions that offer English Learner classes, including community colleges should consider offering classes outside of the typical business hours during the weekdays as well as extending classes to the weekend hours. This way parents who work multiple jobs and those who have to care for their underage children can still attend classes. Besides language training classes, institutions should also offer career-oriented curricula to provide recent refugee parents with opportunities to choose their career path.

Despite the limitations and need for further research, this study contributes to the literature. New insights were generated as this research provided greater understanding of Second Wave Hmong Refugee Parents' conceptualization of kev txhawb nqa (support) for their adolescent children's academic success.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW #1 PROTOCOL (HMONG VERSION)

Lus nug

1. Koj puas kam qhia rau kuv ib qho zuj zus seb koj lub neej zoo li cas ua ntej thaum yuav tuaj rau teb chaws meskas?
2. Nyob rau lub sij hawm li ntawm xyoo 1970 mus txog rau li ntawm xyoo 1990 ntawv uas muaj muaj Hmoob tuaj Meskas ne koj ho nyob rau qho twg?
3. Ua cas koj ho los nyog tau rau hauv zos vaj loog tsua?
 - a. Thaum nyob hauv qhov tsua, koj nyob qhov twg?
4. Koj txoj kev khwv noj khwv haus thaum tseem nyob Thaib Teb zoo li cas xwb?
5. Ua ntej koj tuaj rau teb chaws Meskas nov koj puas tau kawm ntawv dua?
 - a. Yog koj tau kawm, koj txoj kev kawm thaum ntawd zoo li cas xwb?
 - b. Yog vim li cas thaum ntawv koj thiaj kawm ntawv?
6. Yog vim li cas koj thiaj tuaj rau teb chaws Meskas?
7. Yog vim li cas koj thiaj tuaj rau hauv lub zos Miles City no?
8. Tam sim no koj puas ua hauj lwm dab tsi?
9. Txij thaum koj tuaj txog teb chaws Meskas no koj puas tau kawm ntawv hauv no li?
 - a. Yog koj kawm lawm, koj xab li cas txog txoj kev kawm hawv teb chaws Meskas no piv rau kev kawm nyob rau teb chaws _____ uas koj tau kawm dua los?
10. Koj muaj puas tsawg tus me nyuam?
11. Koj cov me nyuam kawm ntawv qhov twg?
12. Koj xav li cas txog koj cov me nyuam txoj kev kawm xwb?

Lus nug tom qab khob tag

1. Koj puas kam qhia rau kuv ib qho zuj zus seb koj lub neej zoo li cas ua ntej thaum yuav tuaj rau teb chaws meskas?
2. Nyob rau lub sij hawm li ntawm xyoo 1970 mus txog rau li ntawm xyoo 1990 ntawv uas muaj muaj Hmoob tuaj Meskas ne koj ho nyob rau qho twg, thiab koj ua dab tsi?
3. Ua cas koj ho los nyog tau rau hauv zos vaj loog tsua?
 - b. Thaum nyob hauv qhov tsua, koj nyob qhov twg?
4. Koj txoj kev khwv noj khwv haus thaum tseem nyob Thaib Teb zoo li cas xwb?
5. Ua ntej koj tuaj rau teb chaws Meskas nov koj puas tau kawm ntawv dua?
 - c. Yog koj tau kawm, koj txoj kev kawm thaum ntawd zoo li cas xwb?
 - d. Yog vim li cas thaum ntawv koj thiaj kawm ntawv?
6. Yog vim li cas koj thiaj tuaj rau teb chaws Meskas?
7. Yog vim li cas koj thiaj tuaj rau hauv lub zos Miles City no?
8. Tam sim no koj puas ua hauj lwm dab tsi?
9. Txij thaum koj tuaj txog teb chaws Meskas no koj puas tau kawm ntawv hauv no li?
 - b. Yog koj kawm lawm, koj xab li cas txog txoj kev kawm hawv teb chaws Meskas no piv rau kev kawm nyob rau teb chaws _____ uas koj tau kawm dua los?
10. Koj tsev neeg muaj puas tsawg leej?
11. Koj muaj puas tsawg tus me nyuam?
12. Koj cov me nyuam kawm ntawv qhov twg?
13. Koj xav li cas txog koj cov me nyuam txoj kev kawm xwb?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW #1 PROTOCOL (ENGLISH VERSION)

Interview questions

2. Can you tell you in details your life experiences prior to coming to the U.S.?
3. Where were you during the 1970s and 1990s when Hmong people were coming to the U.S.?
4. How did you settle in Wat Thamkrabok?
 - a. Where did you live in Wat Thamkrabok?
5. What did you do for living in Thailand?
6. Did you attend school prior to coming to the U.S.?
 - a. If so, what was your experience like?
 - b. Why did you go to school for?
7. Why did you come to the U.S.?
8. Why did you come to Miles City?
9. What do you do for living now?
10. After moving here, did you or do you go to school here in the U.S.?
 - a. If yes, how is your schooling experience here compare to your schooling experience in _____ country, if any?
11. How many children do you have?
12. Where do your children go to school?
13. What do you think about your children's schooling?

Revised interview questions

2. Can you tell me in details your life experiences prior to coming to the U.S.?
3. Where you and what were you doing during the 1970s and 1990s when Hmong people were coming to the U.S.?
4. How did you settle in Wat Tham Krabok?
 - a. Where did you live in Wat Thamkrabok?
5. What did you do for living in Thailand?
6. Did you attend school prior to coming to the U.S.?
 - a. If so, what was your experience like?
 - b. Why did you go to school for?
7. Why did you come to the U.S.?
8. Why did you come to Miles City?
9. What do you do for living now?
10. After moving here, did you or do you go to school here in the U.S.?
 - a. If yes, how is your schooling experience here compare to your schooling experience in _____ country, if any?
11. How many people are in your family?
12. How many children do you have?
13. Where do your children go to school?
14. What do you think about your adolescents' schooling?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW #2 PROTOCOL

English

1. How many high school children do you have?
2. How many of your children are in college, or will be in college this fall?
3. What is (adolescent's name) studying?
4. What year is (adolescent's name) in high school/college?
5. What do you mean when you said you are/were txom nyem (poor)?
6. Why did you have a celebration for your child?
7. What did you do when (adolescent's name) told you that he/she struggled in school?
8. Why did you buy your child a laptop?
9. What makes you think that a car would motivate (adolescent's name) to focus and succeed in college?
10. You said that "education is very important" to you. Can you please expand more on that?

Hmoob

1. Koj muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam kawm high school?
2. Koj muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam kawm college?
3. (Koj tus me nyum lub npe) kawm txog dab tsi?
4. (Koj tus me nyum lub npe) kawm xyoo dab tsi lawm?
5. Thaum koj hais tias koj txom nyem no koj txhais tau li cas?
6. Yog vim li cas koj ho ua ib qho kev zoo siab rau koj tus me nyuam?
7. Koj ua li cas xwb thaum (Koj tus me nyum lub npe) qhia rau koj tias nws kawm ntawv nyuab nyuab?
8. Yog vim li cas koj thiaj li yuav lub laptop rau koj tus me nyuam no?
9. Ua cas koj thiaj xav tias ib lub tsheb yuav pab kom (Koj tus me nyum lub npe) rau siab kawm ntawv no?
10. Koj hais tias kev kawm ntawv nws tseem ceeb heev rau koj. Koj sim piav ntxiv seb nws tseem ceeb li cas.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLES OF CODES

Academic failure
Academic success
Adaptability
Ambitious
Application for college
Application for financial aid
Applying for college
Better life
Car
Car insurance
Challenges at school
Community engagement
Community resources
Conversation about school
Cooking
Definition of support
Delay of gratification
Deliberate decision
Difficulty in school is normal
Difficulty is a normal part of acquiring knowledge
Doing your best
Does not ask children to return favor
Don't be afraid of the unknown
Don't rely on others
Don't skip school
Driver license
Dropped out of school to care for the kids
Education in Thailand
Education in the U.S.
Education is doors for independence
Education is a light
Education is independence
Education is self-reliance
Education is the doors to better future
Education lead to better future
Educational support
Emotional support
Facebook
Falling behind school
Family network
Family obligation
Financial support
Financial stress
Focus on school
Food

Food stamp and Medicare
Gas
Give car to motivate children
Give car to remove sources of stress
Good life
Good student
Growing up with no opportunities
Hard work
Health conditions
High school
Hmong
Hmong Americans
Humble
Illiteracy
Importance of education
Importance of the role of an older person
Improving financial status
Income
Independent
Intellectual
Language barriers
Language issue
Learning from others is important
Lonely
Long shift at work
Maturity
Minimum wage
Money
Motivated
Motivation
Motivation for school
No freedom
Obedient children
Patience
Paying bills
Preventing stress
Persevere
Reflecting
Refugee
Refugee program
Resilience
Resources
Restart
School promises good future
Schooling

Schooling in Thailand
Schooling in the U.S.
Socialize
Source of income for the family
Sources of stress
Starting from the bottom
Staying connected
Stress
Stress free
Striving for independence
Struggle
Txhawb nqa
Work hard
Work hard to achieve

APPENDIX E

KEY CULTURAL TERMINOLOGIES

Key Cultural Terms	Approximate Translation	Other meanings used by second-wave Hmong parents
<i>Mob siab</i>	Heartache	To persevere, to persist, to be diligent, to be determined
<i>Ntshaw</i>	To long for something, to covet	To long for something a person lacks
<i>Nyuab siab</i>	To be depressed, to have depression, stressed out ***add this to paper	Feelings of overwhelmed when one cannot solves a problem
<i>Rau siab</i>	To put one's heart into something	To focus on one thing at a time, to invest one's energy and effort into doing something, to try persistently to accomplish something
<i>Ruam</i>	Stupid, ignorant, fool, dumb, unintelligent	To have no formal education
<i>Tho kev</i>	To make a path, to clear a path	A metaphor that is used to describe a journey, a belief that through experiences and familiarity, one will succeed
<i>Tsoo</i>	To collide, to crash, to crush, to smash	To work real hard in an undesirable condition to exchange for compensation
<i>Txom nyem</i>	Poor	To struggle, to lack human right, to lack basic needs for survival, helpless