

FORMER HMONG REFUGEES IN SACRAMENTO COUNTY PERCEPTIONS OF  
THEIR ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION ISSUES

A Project

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by

Che Cha

Pa Lor

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Che Cha

Pa Lor

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Serge Lee, Ph.D

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Students: Che Cha and Pa Lor

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S. Torres, Jr. Date

Division of Social Work

Abstract  
of  
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Acculturation can be defined as transformations people experience as a result of contact with culturally different perceptions and when two or more cultures come in contact. Assimilation can be defined as a process of boundary reduction that can occur in which persons of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds interact. This research Project explored acculturation and assimilation difficulties of former Hmong refugees in Sacramento County, California. Former Hmong refugees that attended the Sacramento Hmong New Year were recruited as sample subjects. Findings indicated that 65.7% the former refugee received some type of education besides English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and 34.3% did not receive any education. Furthermore, a social work implication is law makers' ability and motivation to continue to pass policies supporting the many programs that work to help strengthen the refugees to adjust to mainstream society.

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Serge Lee, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Chapter 1

### **Statement of the Problem**

At the start of World War II, the United Nations (UN) refugee agency surfaced to help Europeans who were displaced by the war (UNHCR, 2014). By 1951, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a subsection of the UN, was created to help the people who were displaced by World War II to return home. Based on its 2014 report, the UNHCR indicates that there was an estimated 10.4 million refugees around the globe at the beginning of 2013. The report also states that an estimated 4.8 million registered refugees are located in camps in the Middle East, some of whom are living in temporary shelter, while others are living out in the open. According to the UNHCR criteria, refugees are eligible to receive three possible options, reparation, local integration, or resettlement (UNHCR, 2014).

Reparation can be defined as a country's responsibility to provide refugees monetary support, transportation, and refuge, due to the country's actions that caused the refugees to leave its territory (Cantor, 2011). Jacobsen (2001) described local integration as offering permanent asylum and integration into the host country by the host government. UNHCR defined resettlement as the host country providing refugees with the legal and physical protection, which includes access to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

According to the UNHCR in 2008 there was an estimated 15.2 million refugees around the world, and, of those, more than 839,000 submitted an individual application for asylum status. During that fiscal year, UNHCR asked various countries to consider

resettling 121, 000. Of these refugees, the United States accepted 60,200; the most out of the countries asked. More recently, during the 2013-2014 fiscal periods, about 7,785 refugees arrived in California (Office of Refugee Health Overview (ORHO), 2014); approximately 51% were male and 48% were female and the age ranged from zero years old to 85. The majority of the refugees, which constituted 34% of the total, were from Iraq,

Over the past three decades, the United States Congress legislated and passed congressional acts that aimed to empower refugees during their resettlement process. More importantly, the federal government collaborated with state and local governments to create social policies that would provide refugees with technical assistance with any acculturation difficulties. These social policies allow states to develop resettlement assistance programs, and are mostly funded through the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) (ORHO, 2014). Resettlement social policies are often created in response to refugee crises. For example, in 1980 the Refugee Act was passed for resettlement of the Southeast Asian refugees from the Vietnam War with the following objectives: (1) focus on expanding the definition of refugee; (2) raise the annual limitation; (3) provide for an organized but flexible procedure when there are emergencies; (4) congressional control over the entire process of admitting refugees; (5) asylum provision added to immigration law; and (6) provide federal programs to assist resettlement (Kennedy, 1981).

In 1996, President Clinton signed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (Fragomen, 1997). Fragomen states that after intense efforts in

lobbying the bill, most of the provisions pertaining to legal immigrations were omitted from the final bill. The 1996 act focused on illegal immigration and enhancing border control and it did not focus on taking responsibility of refugees. However, one of the most important provisions that did pass with this act was the expansion of the refugee definition. The expanded definition included a person who has been forced to abort a pregnancy, undergo a forced sterilization, or has been prosecuted for refusing to participate in a procedure to coercive population control (Fragomen, 1997).

Several decades after the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Refugee Act of 1980 were enacted, the Refugee Protection Act (2010) was introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy. The purpose of the Refugee Protection Act was to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to acknowledge the United States' historic responsibility in protecting refugees who are fleeing from persecution and/or torture (Refugee Protection Act, 2010). According to Pistone (2010), the act was not enacted due to many flaws and gaps. One significant problem was concerns regarding the expansion of expedited removal. Expedited removal allows Customs and Border Patrol Officers to apprehend and deport individuals who do not have appropriate travel documents and ban them for reentry to the country for five years. This problem was one of the main reasons why Pistone believed this bill was not enacted.

Furthermore, Mirza and Heinemann (2012) explain that as refugees begin to resettle in the United States, they are generally eligible to receive government cash aid and medical assistance for eight months. After this time period, they may no longer be able to receive government assistance until they are naturalized citizens. When refugees

resettle, many bring with them a history of physically and psychologically traumatic experiences from their country of origin; without the necessary tools and support, many refugees have difficulties acculturating and resettling (Tran, Nguyen, & Chan, 2014). Mirza and colleague states that the unmet needs of refugees have a harmful effect on their life, and can limit their possibilities of successfully integrating into American culture. Education is also extremely important and valuable to refugees and especially to their children (Isik-Ercan, 2012). However, refugees face barriers, such as difficulty learning the English language, which limits their involvement in their children's academic work.

Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik (2010) reported that many Americans assume that immigrants and refugees will assimilate into mainstream society when they learn and are exposed to a new culture, forgetting all their traditions as soon as they learn new ones. On the contrary, Schwartz and colleagues found that practitioners who work with immigrants must learn the characteristics of the migrants themselves, where they originated, their socioeconomic status, their local community, and their fluency in the language to help refugees integrate into society. Acculturation and assimilation could help improve immigrants' and/or refugees' health status; however, the lack of adequate programs (i.e. resettlement programs) affects refugees' acculturation process because they are not receiving the help they need in order to succeed in a new country (Tran, et al., 2014).

Acculturation can be defined as transformations people experience as a result of contact with culturally different perceptions and when two or more cultures come in contact (Schwartz, et al., 2010; Lazarevic, Wiley, & Pleck, 2012). Assimilation can be

defined as a process of boundary reduction that can occur in which persons of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds interact (as cited by Scott, 1982). According to Scott, Hmong refugees are culturally the most dissimilar from the receiving society due to their situated in the mountainous areas of northern Laos, a patrilineal kinship-based social and political organization, a world-view characterized by animism and shamanism, and ancestor worship, and a language only recently constructed by French missionary cultural anthropologist linguistics. As cited by Yang (2003), during the resettlement period, Hmong people experience many acculturation problems and are among the poorest Asian Americans. Furthermore, Hmong individuals have a difficult time adjusting to the host society due to generation gaps. Generation gaps among some individuals and families created tension within families because while the second generation is trying to conform to the new society, the first generation is pushing traditional values and beliefs towards the second generation (Yang, 2003).

### **Background of the Problem**

The Refugee Act of 1980 dates back to hearings conducted from 1965 to 1968 by the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees (Kennedy, 1981). Kennedy reported that those hearings created a bill and a report. Some of its recommendations from the hearing were implemented, while some remained pending. According to Kennedy, in 1978 the Chairman of The Judiciary Committee wrote a letter to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, the Attorney General, and the Chairman of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies' Committee on Migration and Refugees, insisting that they collaborate to shape a new policy regarding the issues pertaining to

refugees. He explained that after several revisions the draft was submitted to Congress, and on March 9, 1979 the proposed Refugee Act of 1980 was introduced.

Kennedy (1981) wrote that between 1975 and 1979 the “boat people,” the Vietnamese refugees fleeing South Vietnam to refugee camps in Thailand following the Vietnam War caught the interest and concern of many Americans. That same year there was also a great need for refugees’ resettlement around the world to the United States, especially over 200,000 Indochinese and Soviet Jew refugees resettled. This overwhelming numbers required an effective policy but Congress did not recognize the needs until Japan, Australia, and France increased their respective share cost of resettling the aforementioned refugees (Kennedy, 1981).

From 2007 to 2009 Mirza and Heinemann conducted a study on Somali and Cambodian refugees who resided in the United States since 1983. They found that before the Somali and Cambodian refugees resettled, they lived in societies where they did not have access to health care or advanced medical technologies that are commonly found in more developed societies. Mirza and his colleague stated that this is one of the reasons why refugees are unaware of the possibilities and benefits the United States has to offer. Additionally, refugees are often unaware of disability rights and the many resources available in the community that designed specifically for refugee.

One of the multiple factors the refugees did not receive proper intervention such as disabilities, was due in large part, the lack of knowledge about the refugees’ cultural background. Furthermore, Mirza and his colleague clarified that service providers for the resettlement of refugees explained that mainstream disability organizations are often

impatient with disabled refugees due to their different cultural backgrounds. This often leads to many refugees not receiving the appropriate type of assistance, such as welfare programs. An example cited was that some refugees received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, or participated in English as a Second Language (ESL) and job training classes but they were restricted because of their disability. One of the restrictions included limited mobility. This put these refugees at a disadvantage by not giving them all the necessary tools to integrate into mainstream society and the ability to be productive (Mirza, et al., 2012).

Since 1995, many Serbian refugees sought refuge in the United States, fleeing from violence and economic deficits in their homeland (Lazarevic, Wiley, & Pleck, 2012). Lazarevic and colleagues explained that the refugees are then faced with acculturating into a new culture and lifestyle to which they are not accustomed. They are now obligated to find a balance between the two cultures in order to have an easy transition into their new host country. For example, finding a balance between two cultures among parents and young adults can be very difficult. The researchers found that young adults find it easier to adjust and acculturate into mainstream society, while parents and older individuals have more difficulty. They also explained that the Serbians fled to the United States to seek individualism but they often find themselves trying to conform to the norms. This causes Serbian refugees and immigrants to gravitate towards living in a community that heavily consist of Serbian refugees so they can feel more attached to their native culture. Although family time is very important to Serbian refugees, families found it difficult to spend time together due to the lack of

understanding of their native culture and of their new culture (Lazarevic, et al., 2012).

Isik-Ercan (2012) conducted a study in 2011 focusing on new Burmese refugees' perspectives in the education. Through her study she found that education is very important to many Burmese refugees by treasuring public education. They see public school as a safe place for their children because their children are always under supervision. Additionally, the education their children are receiving in public school is more rigorous than the education their children were receiving in the school at the refugee camps. Even though they think highly of the education system in America, they are unaware of their disadvantages in the school system. Lazarevic and colleagues found that Burmese parents are unable to help their children complete assignments at home due to their own lack of education. They are also unable to effectively advocate for their children's educational needs because they are unaware of their rights in public schools. Refugee families often lack the resources needed in order to help themselves or their children to reach their maximum potential because there are few programs in place to help refugees and educate them on their rights in a new country (Lazarevic, et al., 2012). There are also no programs to help promote family presence at schools and cultural awareness in the community.

According to Schwartz and colleagues, many of the refugees that resettled in the United States often experience discrimination due to being a minority population. Refugees often feel that their ethnic group is unwanted, inferior, or stereotyped by the majority population. Immigrants and refugees of color face the terrible fact that society may never fully accept them or their children. They found that those who migrate at a



young age are more likely to immerse themselves into the receiving culture's practices and values, whereas, older migrants are more likely to have more contact with their country of origin and this experience is likely to shape the ways in which they approach a new culture. Refugees are often discriminated against because of their noticeable foreign accents, inability to speak English, and their identity as an immigrant. Acculturation remains an issue for some second-generation migrants but not all (Schwartz, et al., 2010).

In comparison between research findings from Schwartz and the study on Somali children's perceived discrimination, Somali youth experience discrimination due to their multiple minority status (Ellis, MacDonald, Klunk-Gillis, Lincoln, Strunin, & Howard, 2010). Based on Ellis et al., gender is a significant factor in shaping one's acculturation experiences, particularly those who come from a patriarchal family. They also explained that many refugees and immigrants are discriminated against based on their attire. Somali girls often elect not to wear a headscarf to avoid being discriminated against or harassed by mainstream society. However, they also face being discriminated against by their own cultural group for not wanting to identify with them (Ellis, et al., 2010).

Tran and colleagues (2014) believe that acculturation can be seen as a process to learn and acquire the host society's language, receive and secure stability in economic status, understand a new culture, and participate in the political system. Refugees have a difficult time acculturating into mainstream society due to the lack of available programs to help assist them. Many of the programs that do exist are not properly equipped to resettle the number of refugees that come into the United States. Refugees find it difficult to communicate with service providers due to language barriers. Many service providers

also find it difficult to work with disabled refugees because they are unaccustomed to disability rights in the United States. They also lack knowledge of the resources available for disabled refugees. Learning the English language is a very important aspect in order for refugees to assimilate into the United States; however, there are not many programs that have the capability and funding to help educate refugees (Tran, et al., 2014).

Moreover, the first wave of Hmong that arrived in the United States occurred 40 years and some still encountered acculturation and assimilation problems. Yang (2003) discussed America's diverse society as an issue facing the Hmong at the time. Nearly ten years before Yang's comment about American's diverse society, Scott (1982) states that many Hmong immigrants face adversities that are new to them and they usually respond by interacting more with each other and less with other ethnic or racial groups. Scott states that there is an enormous gap between the Hmong immigrants' abilities and the needs of the larger society, which causes their difficulties in adjustment. Yang concurred with Scott's statement by saying that providing more services to help Hmong immigrants can help close the gap and improve the Hmong process of acculturation and assimilation into the larger society.

**Study Purpose** .This study aims to examine acculturation and assimilation issues of former Hmong refugees in the greater Sacramento region. The researchers are interested in the following areas:

1. The researchers' primary purpose is to examine former Hmong refugees' level of assimilation and acculturation into mainstream society by examining their ability to drive, own a home, own a car, etc.

2. The researchers' would also like to examine former Hmong refugees' utilization of community-based organizations and their perspectives on whether community-based organizations are resourceful.
3. The researchers would like to examine the relationship between people who the former Hmong refugees associate with as friends compared with the neighborhood they currently live in.

The goal of this research is to allow others to understand and how to better serve this population by meeting their needs and offering programs that can enhance their acculturation process in Sacramento.

**Theoretical framework.** The frameworks that are most applicable to our research are Attachment Theory and Solution-Focused Therapy (Snyder, Shapiro, & Treleaven, 2012). Snyder, Shapiro, and Treleaven explained that attachment theory focuses on human connection and suggests that people are wired to emotionally connect with one another. This theory also suggests that there is a powerful relationship between the child's development and how the parent treats the child. According to Snyder and associates, attachment theory can also explain what a person is like later in life based on earlier experiences. Many refugees have difficulty acculturating to the host country because of their attachment to their country of origin. This theory can help explain how to work with refugees and what strategies can help them to more easily transition into their host society.

Coady and Lehmann (2008) described Solution-focused therapy as focusing on the solutions to an issue and the strengths that the client possesses. In this framework,

clients are seen as having the necessary tools to solve their own issues; however, they need someone else to help guide them along the way. Refugees have the capability of acculturating to their host country; however, they may be overwhelmed by all the new adjustments. They need others to help lead them to be able to acculturate. This can also help the practitioner to pinpoint areas with which the refugees need help.

## Chapter 2

### **Review of the Literature**

This chapter will begin by defining the terms acculturation, assimilation, and refugee, and will be followed by a review of the literature on America as a nation of immigrants. Sub-topics to be examined include immigration acts, non-refugee immigrants, general issues refugees may face, European refugees, African refugees, Asian refugees, Southeast Asian refugees, and family structures of Southeast Asian groups.

#### **Acculturation, Assimilation and Refugee Definition**

The United Nations Conventions and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees define a refugee as any person displaced in their own country (Kennedy, 1981). Kennedy stated that the House of Representatives added people who were being prosecuted or who fear persecution in their home country to the definition. The admission status of refugees is to be the same as immigrants and permanent resident aliens. In addition, the admission of refugees to this country is a federal decision, so the federal government is obligated to assist communities in resettling refugees and help them to become self-sustaining (Kennedy, 1981).

Kennedy stated that resettlement programs were created to ease and enable the transition from refugees to permanent residents or citizenship by allowing them to acculturate into mainstream society. Acculturation can be defined as changes that people go through as a result of contact with culturally different experiences and when two or more cultures come in contact (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010;

Lazarevic, Wiley, & Pleck, 2012). Acculturation can often result in shifts in the cultural traditions of one or both groups and occurs when immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are all assumed to be permanently settled in their new home country (Schwartz et al., 2010). Lazarevic et al. stated that incoming individuals who present themselves with positive attitudes towards both their culture of origin and their host culture tend to present the most positive acculturation and assimilation. In addition, individuals who have a different culture of origin compared to the host culture will have a difficult time acculturating to the host culture. Social support is also a factor to consider when there are acculturation or assimilation issues (Lazarevic, et al., 2012).

Acculturation used to be seen as a unidimensional process, which assumes that once an immigrant or refugee acquires the values, practices, and beliefs of their new homelands, they are expected to replace their cultural heritage with the new culture (Schwartz, et al., 2010). Schwartz and colleagues contended that in order for one to understand acculturation, one must look at the context which includes the characteristics of the refugees, the country that they are from and their native language. They also argued that acculturation refers to the change of culture so it is important to understand how each individual defines culture. Acculturation is not a “one-size-fit-all” concept; each and every individual has different stories and backgrounds (Schwartz, et al., 2010).

Assimilation can be defined as a process of boundary reduction that can occur when persons of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds interact within a larger community (Scott, 1982). The assimilation process is forward looking and is guided by an implicit deficit model (Rumbaut, 1997). Rumbaut stated that in order to advance in

this country, immigrants need to learn how to be more “American” and shed the old traditions and cultural practices. Scott (1982) broke down the process of assimilation into four categories: integration, acculturation, identification, and amalgamation. As noted by Scott, integration is a process of structural assimilation that occurs in situations where there are both personal and impersonal contacts with economic and political institutions, neighborhoods, friendship circles, and marriage. Acculturation refers to the cultural assimilation process, identification refers to the process by which members of different societies develop a single shared identity and amalgamation refers to either intermarriage or sexual exploitation. Scott stated that these processes can be presented separately and/or interdependently; therefore, some people may experience all categories, while some may experience none.

### **Immigration Acts**

One of the main events of the United States history that led to immigration legislation was Chinese immigrants migrating to the United States to look for jobs. Immigration acts have been put in place for centuries now and one of the first laws to ban immigration was the Chinese Exclusion Act (CEA) of 1882 (Kil, 2012). Kil explained this act as banning Chinese laborers, skilled or unskilled, from entering into the United States, but there were exceptions for merchants, students, teachers, and travelers. During that period, Chinese immigrants who resided in the United States already were required to register with authorities and carry identification with them at all times. This act eventually led to Congress enacting an ‘*Asiatic Barred Zone*’ in 1917, which preventing

all Asian immigration to the United States. Kil stated that the CEA was eventually repealed in 1943 after World War II due to China's alliance with the United States.

Lobo and Salvo (1998) reported that in 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act was adopted limiting the number of immigrant visas the Eastern Hemisphere (Asia, Europe, Africa, and Oceania) received. By all accounts, the Eastern Hemisphere countries were limited to only 170,000 visas, and each country was allowed only 20,000 persons. One purpose of this law was family reunification, as there were about 126,000 visas set aside for close relatives of United States residents, including siblings, spouses, and unmarried children. Lobo and Salvo (1998) further explained that there were about 10,000 visas allocated to refugees who were fleeing from communist countries.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was created to alleviate the bias due to United States favoring European immigrants over other immigrants (Lobo & Salvo, 1998). Lobo and Salvo state that the act was created to balance the number of legal immigrants from non-European countries; however, the act did not balance legal immigration but helped increase the numbers of legal immigrants. They explained too that the act did not go into full effect until 1969, and the analysis of that act was not completed until 1972. More specifically, from 1972 to 1977 2/3 of Asians came into the United States through family reunification. This included 40 percent under family preferences and 27 percent as immediate relatives, mainly from the Philippines, Korea, and China.

In 1980 the United States Congress passed the Refugee Act, which codified fair treatment of refugees emigrating from both communist and noncommunist countries to



America (Kennedy, 1981). The Act also allowed more refugees to enter the United States and provided more federal assistance programs to assist newcomers' resettlement.

Kennedy explained that the act was developed by the Carter administration to allow Cuban refugees to seek asylum in the United States; however, due to its flaws, there were many loopholes which caused too many refugees to arrive in Florida without the proper supports put into place.

### **America as a Country of Immigrants**

#### **Non-Refugee Immigrants**

In the last 200 years, the United States population has grown significantly due in part to the increase of immigrants and refugees. Chinese immigrants are an example of some of the first non- European immigrants to the United States (Holland, 2007). They first arrived in British North America in the 1780s, though they did not arrive in the United States until the 1820s. Holland states that these Chinese migrant groups first emigrated to British North America because of Canada's welfare system at the time. He also talked about a few factors that pushed Chinese emigrants to immigrate to America. One of the factors was the discovery of gold in California in 1849, and another factor was the political and economical instability in China. Many more Chinese immigrated to the United States in the 1860s because of the work available in the construction of the railroads (Holland, 2007).

Mass migration to the United States occurred from 1880 to 1924, which primarily consisted of European immigrants (Hirschman, 2005). After 1965, the waves of immigration primarily came from Latin America and Asia. Hirschman (2005) stated that

the primary growth of the American population was due to immigration, because the population started with less than 4 million in 1790 to over 270 million in 2000. Many of the early immigrants who migrated from Great Britain and northwestern Europe in late 1800s and early 1900s were considered to be “old immigrants.” Those who migrated from other parts of Europe after that time were considered “new immigrants” (Hirschman, 2005; Barrett & Roediger, 2005).

Another important immigrant group to the United States was the Germans. According to Von Schneidmesser (2002), German immigrants were people who speak German but were not necessarily from Germany. The first noted settlement of German immigrants in America was in 1683 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. As stated by Von Schneidmesser, German immigration peaked during the 1850s and 1860s and accounted for almost 35% of the total immigrants that arrived to the United States during this ten year period. Schneidmesser pointed out that because German-speaking immigrants come from different countries, German Americans display limited unity and have no great interest in a common history.

This research Project discovered a third significant immigrant group, part of the wave of immigrants during the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the Irish. As history indicates, due to a food crisis in Northern Ireland thousands of Irish emigrated to America between 1840 and 1890 (Barrett & Roediger, 2005). Barrett and Roediger discussed that many of the Irish newcomers were concentrated in the cities due to their unskilled background. Similar to other immigrant groups, some Irish immigrants, particularly those with poor peasant backgrounds, had difficulty acculturating to their

resettlement while others actually served as role models (Hirschman, 2005; Barrett & Roediger, 2005).

### **General Issues Refugees May Encounter**

In the past few decades, many people have fled to America as refugees for a variety of reasons, and refugees' experiences differ from those of voluntary immigrants. Refugees often face unique obstacles to maintaining contact with family when they are scattered around the world. It also becomes very difficult for them to try and connect with their home country due to their circumstances (Boyle & Ali, 2010). Some other obstacles that refugees encounter include learning a new culture and obtaining and accessing appropriate education and employment (Hynie, Guruge, & Shakya, 2012). Many refugees may also have gone through a traumatic event which led to their forced migration for survival, and there have been many studies that were conducted to evaluate how refugees acculturated into their new host country. For example, Boyle and Ali discussed research conducted by Foner (1997) which found that sex and age contribute to how refugees acculturate into the mainstream. Foner also explained that in the refugees' new country, elders are now compelled to watch children while the parents go off to work. The elders are also the ones who show the strongest representations of traditional beliefs and practices. If they are absent, then the man of the household will have to step up and take some of the household responsibility.

American values often clash with refugees' traditional values. For instance, women may have more rights in the United States compared to when they were living in their home countries (Boyle & Ali, 2010). This creates a conflict because women are

taking on more responsibilities outside of the home and this is not the norm according to their traditions. There are also many traditional practices that are illegal in the United States. An example of this is the United States' prohibition of polygamy, leading some families to redefine the term family. This also leads to families changing their roles to better fit their host country (Boyle & Ali, 2010).

Redefining marriages has also been a challenge because when refugees arrive in a host country, they are more likely to be in a mixed marriage (Keel & Drew, 2004). This can often lead to the societal beliefs that those refugees have acculturated and assimilated into society; however, the researchers, Keel and Drew, found that refugees begin a process of adapting to the land, culture, people, and language, while questioning whether to fully acculturate into the host country or to maintain one's own culture. Ethnic identity and ethnicity are also two important aspects that may produce conflicts that refugees must face. A lack of social support and social network development makes it difficult to assimilate, especially when refugees are not living with their family members and have no contact with them (Keel & Drew, 2004). This becomes a problem because they have no social support and often feel lost and empty in their new host country. Keel and Drew found that refugee experiences receive less attention than voluntary migrants, which can lead to people perceiving and misinterpreting voluntary migrants and refugees.

Even without social support, refugees are entitled to some government assistance in the United States (Boyle & Ali, 2010). Many of the services are aimed at helping children and women who are more likely to receive assistance than men. Families that have younger children are more likely to receive help faster and easier compared to

families who have older children. In addition, extended families are not valued as much in the United States compared to other countries, and while living in the United States, women are often more empowered to get jobs and be the heads of households. Moreover, when men are unemployed, it can lead to threats to their masculinity and provide women the opportunity to leave bad relationships (Boyle & Ali, 2010).

The diversity of the refugee population in the United States also requires that the United States meet their mental health needs when they arrive. The United States can accomplish this by responding to this need by adapting clinical services based on refugee needs (Kaczorowski, Williams, Smith, Fallah, Mendez, & Nelson-Gray, 2011); however, as of now, there are only a few resources that exist to support individuals and families with children from diverse cultures who do not speak English fluently. This causes conflicts because many refugees migrate to the United States due to social and political problems in their home countries, which can lead to some people migrating to the United States with disabilities (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). Many of their needs are not met because of the lack of services that are offered to them or their lack of knowledge to obtain those services.

Before resettlement, many refugees lived in societies where they did not have assistance from the government to help meet their needs (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). This led them to refrain from seeking help when they arrived in the United States. A study conducted by Mirza and his associate found that the services that were being offered to disabled refugees were inadequate in responding to their needs. For example, service providers only focused on helping them medically and did not seek any help for

the refugees' English education or to assist their learning of basic medical terms. This was a problem within many refugee communities because they usually exhausted their services without getting the proper help (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012).

When refugees were residing in their homeland, they usually did not know where to get help besides their own community. Many of them have lived in a society that is resource-constrained and now they have little knowledge of the services that are being offered to them in their new host country (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). Mainstream disability providers should work together with refugee service providers to help meet the needs of refugees. Mirza and Heinemann suggested that this can begin through cross agency trainings and communication as their findings show that disabled refugees' needs are not being met after they have resettled in the United States. These unmet needs are related to the service gap that has been created by disability service providers and refugee service providers (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012).

Youth refugees are often the group which encounters the most changes. They are stuck between two worlds and have to make the difficult decision of choosing to conform to the new culture or embrace their traditions (Hynie, Guruge, & Shakya, 2012). Additionally, youth are often translators and interpreters for their parents and grandparents and are very often the ones who carry the responsibility of financially supporting the family because they have more opportunity and ability to learn the language. This allows them to interpret and navigate through the various systems, providing assistance such as accompanying family members to doctor appointments, reading letters, helping with finances, and other responsibilities that require knowing the

language (Hynie, et al., 2012).

Many of these youth are not used to providing for the family financially. Before their migration, they only provided for the family by tending livestock and helping around the house (Hynie, et al., 2012). Now that they are in a new country that requires them to work and pay bills, they are very often unfamiliar with and overwhelmed by their many varying responsibilities. Many youth are still very loyal to their home country and are willing to send money to relatives and help rebuild their community. These added responsibilities in addition to school required the type of self-sufficiency to which they are unaccustomed because they had previously relied on their parents; however, now they have to do it themselves and must become independent (Hynie, et al., 2012).

With these new responsibilities, come conflicts between youth and parents because parents do not agree with the youths' decisions to get an education and a job because of their age (Hynie, & et al., 2012). Some parents see youth who are taking responsibility as an act of disrespect. This creates a lack of communication and an increase in misunderstanding. Hynie et al. (2012) stated that many youths believed that both the parents and the children need to be educated to help better understand one another. Parents need to be educated on the new traditions and norms of the new world and youth need to be educated on the traditions of their home country. There is often been a strain in the relationship due to the lack of time spent together. Families are now spending less time together and more time on their individual responsibilities such as work and school (Hynie et al., 2012).

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URMs) have become a huge global problem as

a result of war, natural disasters, displacement and extreme poverty (Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012). According to Carlson, Cacciatore, and Klimek, URM's are children who enter the United States from countries all around the world to flee from war, poverty, or oppression without any parent or guardian. Social workers can help URM's by delivering services to help address these children's unique situations. URM's are able to resettle into the United States through the United States Resettlement Program, which will allow them to fall under the Unaccompanied Minors Program (Carlson et al., 2012). URM's experience the same discrimination as all other immigrant youth, but without the support of their parents. This creates risk factors to URM's as they must learn a new language, adjust to new values, and adjust to new systems. At the same time they are trying to cope with the traumatic events which led them to flee their country.

### **European Refugees**

Some of the European refugees who arrived in the United States were Serbians. Many Serbian refugees are from the former Yugoslavia who sought refuge in the U.S. due to the violence and economic stressors caused from the five-year long ethnic war (Lazarevic, et al., 2012). Lazarevic et al. stated that when Serbian refugees arrived in the United States they must learn a new culture that is very different from theirs. They must also find a balance between mainstream societal norms and their traditions. Lazarevic and associates discussed the phenomenon that Serbian parents are more likely to practice their traditions, while youth are more likely to immerse themselves in the new host society. As a result, youth usually have to negotiate with their parents concerning what cultural artifacts they want to keep from their culture while at the same time seeking



independence.

Lazarevic and colleagues also observed that for each incoming refugee group, it is very important for them to understand how they can acculturate into the new host society or the extent to which refugees seek to acculturate. The Serbian refugees fled the Yugoslavian government because the government believed that everyone in the country should identify themselves as Yugoslavian. Also the Yugoslavian government believed that the residents should not express any other ethnicity or religion. However, due to the experience of freedom after the fall of communism in Yugoslavia, each identity started to be aware of the uniqueness of their ethnicity. This created turmoil and tragic consequences to those who went against the government (Lazarevic, et al., 2012).

Lazarevic, Wiley, and Pleck stated that besides dealing with their past, they are also dealing with learning different strategies on how to function in a society where the language, customs, and culture are very different from their home country. They found that Serbian refugees may be more inclined to live in Serbian neighborhoods which can help the attachment to their native culture but may cause more difficulty for them to acculturate into the American culture.

There are many youth who feel obligated to their family and this can help them to have an increased attachment towards their culture of origin. Lazarevic and colleagues found that some youth believe that their parents are less acculturated in the American culture and the youth may have a higher level of maintaining their native culture because they want to continue having a strong connection to the values and beliefs of their customs. Lazarevic and colleagues stated even though it may be important for Serbian

youth to practice their customs of their home culture, they should also link themselves as much as possible to the new culture so they can have a sense of belonging. On the other hand, they found that some youth have a lower acculturation with their native culture due to a lack of quality family time. Overall, they concluded that the more the youth are “Americanized”, the more likely they are uncomfortable with their parents. This leads to youth and parents not communicating and having strains within the family (Lazarevic, et al., 2012).

### **African Refugees**

The various refugee populations to the United States consist of refugees from different parts of the world including African, mainly Somali refugees. Most other refugees come to America with singular social status while Somali refugee youth hold many multiple statuses and identities (Ellis, et. al, 2010). Some of the multiple social identities include being African American, an African American male or female, a refugee, and a youth. However, if Somali youth show a strong behavioral acculturation to the host culture, they can struggle from discrimination from within their family as well. Their families may often believe that they are throwing away their traditions and values. Many Somali youth struggle with the concept of the different gender roles, especially refugee youth who came here with patriarchal cultures. Also, identifying with one’s host culture can be very different from identifying from one’s country of origin. Ellis et al. (2010) found that Somali youth experienced discrimination in relation to social identity. Some of the discrimination they experienced was on their religious beliefs, ethnicity, race, and being an outsider. Discrimination was more prominent to those who wore

headscarves and had Muslim names.

Gender strongly affects how Somali youth acculturated into the United States. Compared to the collective experience of males, many Somali females had a particularly difficult time acculturating to the United States (Ellis et al., 2010). The girls had to deal with the multiple identities of being a girl, black, Somali, and Muslim. These girls from this study described their experience as more discriminatory compared to that of boys. Many of the girls had either expressed pride in their culture or frustration with it. Those who reported more experiences with discrimination also reported higher levels of PTSD and depressive symptoms. Nevertheless, the study found that the more acculturated the Somali girls were to their culture of origin, the healthier their mental statuses were (Ellis et al., 2010). By maintaining a strong association with their culture, protective factors were developed to help them fight against or better tolerate discrimination.

Another factor contributing to the experience of Somali girls is the consideration that Somali women who come from a strong patriarchal culture must conform to their traditional ways of dressing. If they do not, they may suffer from being scorned, ostracized, or other consequences to make them feel rejected from the Somali community. This can lead girls to feel the pressure to abstain from acculturating to the host culture. Ellis et al. speculated that the boys may have an easier time acculturating to the United States due to their power and male privileges.

Kimberly, Skye, and Hymie (2008) discussed how Somali refugees deal with acculturation stressors and how they cope with acculturation challenges. In their report, Kimberly and colleagues stated that the majority of the participants (n=83, 92.2%)

reported that they encountered at least one traumatic event, which caused them to feel fear, helplessness, or horror. Many other participants reported severe physical punishment or being sexually molested growing up and reported that in response they often turn to faith as a coping method.

### **Asian Refugees**

Asian refugees make up an enormous part of the refugee population and come to the United States seeking freedom and peace. This enormous population comes to the United States with different preconceived notions regarding United States' education. Some parents believe that the United States education system is great while some parents may not agree. For example, Burmese parents have historically perceived public school as a great system for their children (Isik-Ercan, 2012). They have often compared the United States schools to the schools that their children went to when they were in refugee camps. Isik-Ercan, (2012) stated that many parents decided to resettle in America due to its education system. Isik-Ercan conducted a study on 28 Burmese parents from 25 families in Fort Wayne during 2011. His study focused on Burmese refugees and their children.

Some Burmese parents stated that America has the best education system after reviewing information about it (Isik-Ercan, 2012). These parents stated they tried to acculturate into society by allowing their children to go to school and attend some school events. Many of the parents reported to have attended parent teacher conferences to see how their children were doing; however, this is usually the only event that these parents are able to attend. This is usually the only time that parents get translators (Isik-Ercan,

2012). They have a difficult time attending any other school related events because they do not have a sufficient understanding of the English language. This leads to a major disconnect between the parents and the school (Isik-Ercan, 2012).

The author, Isik-Ercan, also found that there were barriers preventing access to resources for families and that consequently it became very difficult for families to help their children with their homework. In this study, many of the parents stated they were not able to help their children complete their homework because they lacked the knowledge. The children had to reach out to neighbors or older family members for help. Because the parents lacked the knowledge and skills of the language, they were not able to effectively advocate for their children.

In the past two decades, Iraqi refugees have been more and more frequently resettling in the United States Sanders and Smith (2007) explained that the Iraqi refugee outflow from Iraq has increased tremendously since the United States invasion of Iraq. And the outflow supersedes the outflow of refugees from the Indochina war. Also, even though there are over two million Iraqi refugees worldwide, the United States only accepted a little over 2,000 through its resettlement program from 2003 to 2007. Iraqi refugees had to endure the bureaucratic process of registering with the UNHCR to be able to get referred to resettlement programs. After registering, the UNHCR refers those who were considered most vulnerable to the United States for possible resettlement (Sanders & Smith, 2007). Some people who received priority were victims of torture or other severe trauma, single mothers, unaccompanied minors, those with severe medical problems, and those who had ties to the United States or U.N.'s military. They often had

to wait several months for an interview, which led to them struggling with the possibility of getting deported back to Iraq from refugee camps due to their scarce resources (Sanders & Smith, 2007). Sanders and Smith explained that Iraqis' fear of being deported is due to insurgents targeting them because they helped translate and aid the United States.

Many Iraqi refugees that do resettle here in the United States are often faced with the challenge of dealing with their mental health issues. Jamil, Farrag, Hakim-Larson, et al. (2007) found that many Iraqi refugees who do seek mental health services meet the qualifications of PTSD. Women in the study were found to be more likely to be diagnosed with a depressive disorder while men were found to be more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD.

Iraqi refugees are facing particular challenges as they are trying to resettle and acculturate into a new country because they are receiving financial assistance below the United States poverty line (Masterson, 2010). Masterson stated that the United States government purchases plane tickets for Iraqi refugees to travel to America, but the tickets are considered a no-interest loan. This may be a burden because refugees are in debt before they even land on American soil and are only given an apartment or house with basic items and a one-time payment of \$450. The government only provides eighty days of free healthcare and a thirty-to-ninety-day period of assistance with finding a job. There are some service agencies that extend their assistance based on the refugee needs. The two challenges that many Iraqi refugees face are language and employment, according to Masterson. Many of the refugees are not able to find employment because of English

language deficit. Even those immigrants who had been educated found it difficult to find jobs because of the new system.

### **Southeast Asian Refugees**

Prior to the end of the Vietnam War, there were only a few Vietnamese people living in the United States. According to Tran, Nguyen, and Chan (2014), after the war ended in 1975, the Southeast Asian refugees began to arrive. Among the refugees from Vietnam, Tran and colleagues stated that the first wave consisted of mostly soldiers, government officials, and businesspeople. The second wave consisted of people who escaped Vietnam by boat. They were known as “the boat people”. The third wave consisted of ex-political detainees. In their study, Tran, Nguyen and Chan found that 72% of elderly Vietnamese-Americans spoke little to no English, and 58% were naturalized citizens.

In additions, the researchers indicated that many Vietnamese refugees have had difficulty acculturating due to their disability and their unmet needs. There were many older Vietnamese Americans who carried with them a history of physical and/or psychological problems when they came to the United States (Tran, et. al, 2014). This situation created obstacles for them when they tried to acculturate. Those who came from regions that were devastated by war and rural areas are the ones who have been found to need the most health services. However, people from rural areas may not be aware of the available health services because they had been unable to access them in their home country. Moreover, these Vietnamese American refugees may not be able to access resources due to an inability to communicate with their English-speaking health care

providers. Tran and his associates also observed that even though good health statuses can improve acculturation, many Vietnamese-Americans fled to the United States with many disabilities. This makes it difficult for them to receive the help that they need to better their lives in their new host country.

Many refugees who arrived in the United States speak little to no English and some of those refugees are Hmong. Due to the lack of business and educational opportunity, farming and fieldwork was a significant way of life for the Hmong because it provided food for the family and some of the cultivated crops were sold at the market for money (Pfaff, 1995). In 1982, an education attainment survey was conducted in Minneapolis by Reder on refugees' previous schooling, found that 73% of Hmong elders had never attended school back in Laos, 12% had had a few years of schooling, 7% had had more than 4 years, 5% had had more than 7 years, and only 3% had had more than 9 years (as cited by Vang, 2005). However, Hmong parents who had had no formal education have been found to be seizing the opportunity for their children to receive an education in greater and greater numbers in United States (Vang, 2005).

According to Vang (2005), in California, there were about 36,000 Hmong students from K-12 in public schools, about 85% were Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and 15% were found to be fluent English students. The author of the article stated that many of these students struggled academically and continued to be the third largest population of LEP students in California. Responding to this need, Rah (2007) recommended that using bilingual staff could help to bridge the Hmong students and provide guidance for their parents. The most effective ways for these Hmong students to



become more successful is for the parents to understand the language and support the student in their learning. Rah discussed that providing language support for the parents allowed them to participate in the students' education.

Hmong people have come a long way from transitioning into the Western culture as many have stepped forward and pursued jobs, careers, and the American dream. Lo (2011) stated that although many have transitioned into United States jobs, some Hmong refugees are still practicing agricultural field work because farming has been a skill that the Hmong possessed. When Hmong refugees first began settling in California, Minnesota and Wisconsin, they began farming and using their skills to provide for their families. The first vegetable planted by the Hmong refugees was cucumbers during 1982. Then ginseng became popular in 1990 and was planted in Wisconsin (Lo, 2001). By 1999, there were less Hmong people farming ginseng because many of the families lacked the knowledge about commercial farming, and ginseng did not do well in the market. It led to less Hmong people doing agriculture farming and turning to other jobs in the community. According to the 2010 Census report by the Hmong National Development (2013), the Hmong labor force is at 65%, which is the same for the United States population.

In addition, Tolf, Hollister, and Martin (2013) stated that in the Minnesota's 1990 Census indicated that 65% of Hmong people were not working and more than 60% lived under the poverty line. However, in 2011 the Minnesota Department of Human Service reported that between 2004 and 2010 about 70% to 80% of Hmong had achieved self-support from welfare. The employment work they held was typically low-skilled jobs that

did not increase their job or English language skills. Some jobs that were held by Hmong refugees were factory jobs, caring for children and elderly, house cleaning, and sewing. According to Vang (2013), some of the highest job categories for Hmong people were manufacturing, education, health care, social services, and retail. The highest Hmong employment status was found in the states of Georgia with 79%, Colorado with 76%, North Carolina, and Arkansas with 74% (Vang, 2013).

In Yang's (2003) study, his findings showed the Hmong refugee youth generation is acculturating slowly into the American culture, while the elderly are still struggling to acculturate to the new lifestyle. The youth are having fewer children compared to the older generation, and the native language is spoken less at home. In the 2010 Census, the average Hmong household who spoke English at home increased from 3% in 1990 to 8% in the next few years. English is becoming the primary language in a Hmong home due television as well as learning in school. The English language is important to obtain a stable job (Yang, 2003).

Not only are Hmong Americans living and working here in the United States, many are becoming naturalized United States citizens. The 2000 Census data showed that there was an increase among Hmong immigrants becoming naturalized United States citizens. About 30 percent of the Hmong refugees became naturalized United States citizens compared to the rest of the 40.3 percent of other ethnicities becoming naturalized citizens (HND, 2013). According to the 2010 Census, 7,145 out of 182,726 Hmong refugees and immigrants were naturalized United States citizen in the city of Sacramento.

When Hmong refugees arrived in America, one of the first organizations that

were established was by General Vang Pao in 1976. It was called the Lao Family Community, Inc., which was located in Fresno California (Lo, 2001). Yang (2012) stated that this non-profit agency provided a variety of social services to the refugees. In Sacramento, the Lao Family Community Empowerment was established in 1984. They served the Hmong refugees who were new to the area and who were in the process of resettling. At the time, the organization provided English education, employment programs, housing assistance, health resource, mental health services, and acculturation training. As years passed, the organization has made a few changes to meet the needs of the refugee community. They now serve eight regions and focus on education, health and mental health. This program provided some assistance in job training, United States citizenship classes and translation services (Yang, 2012).

California has the largest Hmong population with about 91,224 residents in 2010 (HND, 2010). In Sacramento, there were about 26,996 Hmong residents who reside there, which is the third highest Hmong population in a metropolitan area (HND, 2010). Sacramento has been a popular city for refugees to resettle, which includes Russians, Ukraines, Hmong, and other refugees. Reese (2013) stated the City of Sacramento has seen a decrease of refugee resettling because the state department had stopped resettling Hmong refugees in Sacramento. The population of Hmong people in California still remains one of the largest populations compared to other states (Reese, 2013).

In 2007, Thao (2007) conducted research on Hmong refugees who resided in Sacramento. The participants were found to have participated and utilized some local non-profit agencies. The findings of the research showed that 26.7% of Hmong people

utilized Sacramento Lao Family, Inc services, 20% sought services from Hmong Women's Heritage Association, about 3% used services from Asian Resources, and 30% have used more than two agencies. The other 20% were found to have not used any agency resources and services since they had arrived in America (Thao, 2007). Thao also found that these individuals were not aware of the available community services where they lived and those services were not being utilized.

Mental health is still an uncertain term to the Hmong. The researchers Collier, Munger, and Moua (2012) interviewed 28 Hmong individuals and found that among these participants they were uncertain of what the term "mental" meant. Their findings indicated that these people had mental health needs. Some of the issues consisted of having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), somatoform disorder, depression and stress caused primarily by the effort to acculturate. The reasons they lacked services were found to be language barriers and insufficient literacy (Collier, et al., 2012).

Findings of Chung and Lin (1994) indicated that Hmong refugees did not seek Western treatments as often compared to Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees. Reasons for this barrier were found to be lack of English language proficiency and a lack of awareness in mental health literacy. Stigmas also were found to play a role in the Hmong culture. Many Hmong reported avoiding seeking help and stated that they did not believe that Western treatment would help them (Collier, et al. 2012).

According to Praff (1995), the Vietnam War was a significant cause of mental health for Hmong refugees. Many refugees still suffer from nightmares, while some were reported to have died in their sleep due to mental health issues. This issue was prominent

with the early first waves of Hmong refugees. It is to this day an unsolved mystery referred to as “Hmong sudden death syndrome”. Others believe it is due to the intense chaos of grief (Praff, 1995).

Due to the traumatic events of the Vietnam War, many first generation Hmong have been found to experience PTSD (Tatman, 2004). Tatman stated the primary diagnosis was chronic adjustment disorder instead of PTSD. Rates of mental health diagnosed were found to be twice as high compared to the American population (Tatman, 2004; Westermeyer, 1988). In addition, the acculturation process has also been cited as contributing factor to the reported rates of stress and depression (Tatman, 2004).

Even with the advancement of medical technology and western medicine, many Hmong still consider seeking a shaman for help during illness rather than getting treatment from a doctor (Lee, Lytle, Yang, & Lum, 2010). Thao (2007) found that Hmong adult ages 30 years or older were more likely to prefer help from shaman over a doctor due to language barriers. Many were found to seek Hmong shamans because shamans can read signs and communicate with spirits to determine the problem. If the problem was detected to be physical, herbal medicine would then be consumed. If the shaman detected the ailment to be the result of a spiritual illness, he would perform spiritual callings to help find that lost souls that had wandered away from the body to cause the spiritual illness (Pfaff, 1995). Utilizing a focus group, Lee, Lytle, Yang, and Lum (2010), found that Hmong elders prefer shamans because they find that the explanation of the symptoms is more comprehensive than that of a Western mental health professional, who views mental health ailments to be the result of chemical imbalance.

### **Family Structures of Southeast Asian Groups**

The early wave of Southeast Asian refugees who come to the United States faced many issues that dealt with family structure. Landale, Thomas, and Van Hook (2011) cited from other literatures that many refugee children came to the United States with only a mother because the father was taken away to fight in the war or was killed in action. Sometimes family structure among Southeast Asian youths is usually determined by the absence of their father. However, some refugee families were able to create complex networks of extended-family relationships to help build family cohesion across fragmented households (Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011). Many of these households may contain a few generations and/or family friends. Grandparents sometimes live with family to help with child care. Moreover, some of the Southeast Asian groups that may still struggle with assimilating into the American family structure are the Hmong and Vietnamese refugees and their children.

Vietnamese refugees are a group within the greater Southeast Asian demographic, and their migration to the United States has created a strain to their family structure. There have been many structural and functional changes in Vietnamese refugee spousal relations and family life (Fox, 1991). Some of the major variables to these changes are being exposed to more liberal views toward gender equality in the United States and spousal power differentials. Fox (1991) stated that while living in Vietnam, women were usually dominated by male authority. However, the increase of employment of wives in Western society could have possibly increased the necessary participation of husbands in

household tasks, which can decrease the power differentials between the wives and husbands.

Fox (1991) suggested that many families in Vietnam operated with an open family system, which allows the family to provide support for the separate roles both within and outside the home. The open family system also allows a high degree of spousal power differentials that favors the husbands. The closed family system, which is often associated with Western society, provides support for joint activities and a low degree of spousal power differentials (Fox, 1991). Many Vietnamese refugee families shifted from the open family system to the closed family system due to acculturating into the United States. This can be a result from refugees living in different communities. Many refugee families have lived in the United States for many years and have adapted or are still learning how to adapt to the American culture and family lifestyle (Fox, 1991).

As a fast growing Asian population, there is an estimate of 260,076 Hmong residing in the United States Among these numbers are first, second, and third generation Hmong (HNH, 2011). Miyares (1997) examined the process of Hmong refugee in the San Joaquin Valley and concluded that Hmong people are changing their perception and view of traditional cultural practices. The younger generations are progressing slowly and acculturating better than the elderly Hmong refugees (Tang & O'Brien, 1990; Tatman, 2001; Tatman, 2004).

In the Hmong culture, families and relatives play a big role because they are important factors to each other (Jeff, 2013). The Hmong culture has a hierarchy and begins from the father being at the top then the mother and down to the children, in which

boys are valued more because they will be the head of the household and care for the family (Donnelly, 1994; Faderman, 1998). The men are the ones who tended to do agricultural work, build homes, and watch livestock. As for the women, they produced clothing for the family members, maintained the family's garden, and helped the family with agricultural duties (Jagodzinski, 2001). Sons and daughters are both seen as important, but sons are to stay with the family to care for the parents and ancestors, while daughters are to leave and become a part of another clan.

As the Hmong population continues to grow in America, it's harder to live under the same household due to government and housing regulations (Jeff, 2013). Family members would live close by each other for support with assistance such as babysitters, resources (i.e. monetary, translating paperwork, etc.), and cultural guidance. According to Pfeifer, Sullivan, and Yang (2013), over time the Hmong have been increasingly not lived under the same household as was done back in Laos and Thailand because they are now striving to live in separate households and delay marriage.



## Chapter 3

### **Methods**

#### **Study Objectives**

This chapter discusses the research methodology utilized to complete the master's Project. The research study used the quantitative approach to assess assimilation and acculturation perceptions of former Hmong refugees in the county of Sacramento. The research methods used to recruit research subjects and collect data are summarized below.

#### **Study Design**

According to Rubin and Babbie (2013), an exploratory research design examines a topic of interest when it is new, has not yet been studied, or needs more study based on the topic. As discussed by Rubin and Babbie, exploratory design is suitable to examine the level of assimilation of former Hmong refugees in Sacramento, California. In order to determine refugees from non-refugees, the researchers asked the respondents if they were born in Laos or Thailand and when they arrived in the United States. The researchers used a self-administered, implied consent survey to recruit participants and administered questionnaires to respondents who agreed to participate in the research project.

#### **Sampling Procedures**

As members of the local Hmong community, the researchers knew there would be many Hmong people attending the Sacramento Hmong New Year (SHNY) celebration, usually occurring from the 27th-30th of November each year. The celebration attracts thousands of Hmong people from around the region, including both American born and

former refugees. The researchers attended the event-seeking participants who were former Hmong refugees, residing in Sacramento, and over the age of 30. After being granted permission by the Division of Social Work, Committee for the Protection of Human Subject, the researchers attended the second day of the celebration and spent the morning gathering data from 35 participants who consisted of elderly Hmong refugees now living in the US. Researchers initially attempted to use the snowball sampling procedure by asking participants for referrals to interview. Although the researchers initially believed the snowball sampling procedure would help get more people to interview, they found that many were unable to refer others who fit the criteria of the population they sought. Instead the researchers found that using the availability sampling procedure became more effective. As stated by Rubin and Babbie (2013), available sampling method chooses those who are conveniently ready and available. This method worked better since the researchers were able to easily identify and select the population of elderly Hmong refugees rather than those who were born in the US, simply by finding those who seemed to fit the age range and were available to be interviewed.

The initial goal of the researchers was to recruit at least 40 participants, but instead they were only able to recruit 35 respondents due to a lack of interest. The sample participants were former Hmong refugees who had left Laos or Thailand to the United States. All participants were at least 30 years or older and required English to Hmong translation of the survey questionnaires since they were not able to read English. There were only a few participants who did not require the researchers to orally translate the consent form and questionnaire. In order to be chosen, participants were required to be

over the age of 30, to have lived in Sacramento and be born in Laos or Thailand, and to have arrived in the United States as political refugees. When the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in the Division of Social Work at Sacramento State approved the study, the researchers made 60 copies of the survey for their data collection, and set out to collect data on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Overall, 13 males and 22 females participated in the research study. Lastly, the participants did not receive monetary compensation or gifts for participating in the study.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The following steps were used to conduct the study: 1) The researchers stood at two different locations and randomly contacted participants who seemed available to participate; 2) before conducting the survey, the participants were formally informed about the survey and were asked if they still wanted to participate; 3) the researchers explained the purpose and objective of the study; 4) after the verbal agreement, the researchers translated the consent form to the participants since most required translation; 5) upon agreement with the consent form, the researchers orally began the survey with the participants; 6) the participants were informed that they could stop at any time or skip any questions that were uncomfortable to answer; and 7) after the completion of survey, the researchers attempted to obtain referrals from the participants.

Since most participants required translation of the consent form and questionnaire, the time frame for each survey was about 10-15 minutes per participant and 10 minutes for those who were able to read English. For those who were not able to read, the researchers marked the answers to the survey as they translated each question.

### **Instruments**

The survey consisted of 35 questions developed by the researchers, including five open-ended questions and 30 close-ended questions adapted from surveys cited in the review of relevant literature and the researchers' study questions. Initially the questionnaire included only 20 questions along with the oral script, but, after a review from the advisor, Dr. Lee, the researchers were advised to make improvements and further develop the questions. Along with improved wording of the questions, the researchers refined the questionnaire so that Hmong people could better understand a direct translation of the question from English to Hmong. The final draft of the questionnaire, now consisting of 35 questions, was resubmitted for review and additional changes were made in the format and wording as suggested by the advisor. Finally, after the last changes of the questionnaire was approved, the researchers believed they had a tool that would be able to glean information on the acculturation and assimilation process, demographic characteristics, and awareness of community resources including social service programs available in Sacramento.

### **Data Analysis**

The researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program to analyze the data collected. Descriptive statistics were used to explain and describe the data collected. The descriptive statistic examined the measures of central tendency used to represent the data in different sections of the questionnaires. Some of the questions were paired and used to describe assimilation and acculturation, the utilization of community-based organizations, and the contributing factors that helped make refugees

aware of community-based organizations.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

The researchers met with Project Advisor Dr. Serge Lee and submitted the Human Subjects application or Institutional Review Board (IRB) multiple times before it was approved. In the first review, submitted on September 5th, 2014, Dr. Serge Lee sent the application back and asked for more details and assisted in correction of wording and procedures.

At the beginning of September 2014, Dr. Serge Lee, the researchers' advisor initially reviewed providing suggestions and made minor modifications to the application and questionnaire. The researchers made the corrections and resubmitted the documents a couple weeks later for the second review. Again, the application was met by further suggestions to improve the survey and explain how the researchers would keep the privacy of the participants confidential. After the changes were made, the documents were reviewed for a third time. By the end of September, the researchers had made multiple modifications to the documents before their advisor finally approved them. The application and questionnaire were then submitted to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in the Division of Social Work on October 2, 2014 and was approved on October 14, 2014 with the approval reference number of 14-15-027.

## Chapter 4

### **Study Findings and Discussions**

This chapter examines and presents the outcomes acquired from the 35 survey questions that were administered to 35 former Hmong refugees living in the Sacramento area. To recap, this is an exploratory study to examine the former Hmong refugees' acculturation and assimilation levels. The researchers sought to discover the participants' knowledge of community-based organizations and their resourcefulness. The researchers also focused on the respondents' interaction with the larger society.

As prior researches have shown, many refugees and immigrants have had difficulties adjusting to their new country. Overall, this section of the report findings discussed the following groups of variables: age, gender, how well they speak and write in Hmong, how well they speak and write in English, religion, respondents who can drive, who own a car, own a home, attended school, level of education, utilization of community-based organization, outreach from agencies, and their effectiveness.

## Overall Findings

Table 1

### *Age of Respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	35-39	3	8.6	8.6	8.6
	40-44	7	20.0	20.0	28.6
	45-49	6	17.1	17.1	45.7
	50-54	4	11.4	11.4	57.1
	55-59	3	8.6	8.6	65.7
	60-64	3	8.6	8.6	74.3
	65-69	2	5.7	5.7	80.0
	70-74	3	8.6	8.6	88.6
	75-79	4	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 1, the age of respondents ranged from 35 to 79. Specifically, 8.6% (n=3) of the respondents were between the ages of 35-39, 20% (n=7) were between the ages of 40-44, followed by 17.1 % (n=6) in the range of 45-49, 11.4% (n=4) at 50-54, 8.6% (n=3) at 55-59, 8.6% (n=3) at 60-64, 5.7% (n=2) at 65-69, 8.6% (n=3) at 70-74, and 11.4% (n=4) at 75-79. Many of the younger respondents stated in the survey that they had arrived in the United States at a younger age. Some respondents stated they arrived in the

United States between the ages of 2 to 6 and some stated they arrived when they were between the ages of 30 to 50.

Table 2

*Gender of the Respondents*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	13	37.1	37.1	37.1
Female	22	62.9	62.9	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 demonstrates that among the respondents, twenty-two (62.9%) indicated that they were female and thirteen (37.1%) were male. Per their personal and professional experiences, the researchers who are Hmong themselves, noted that Hmong male tend to be reluctant to engage in conversations with strangers. Perhaps, because of this reluctance, female prospective respondents were generally more willing to participate in the research project than were their male counterparts.



Table 3

*How Well do Respondents Speak Hmong*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	So so	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Good	4	11.4	11.4	14.3
	Very well	30	85.7	85.7	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

In addition, of the 35 respondents, 85.7% (n=30) state that they speak Hmong very well, 11.4% (n=4) state that they speak Hmong good, and 2.9% (n=1) state that they speak Hmong so so (see table 3).

Table 4

*How Well do you Write Hmong*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	14	40.0	40.0	40.0
	So so	5	14.3	14.3	54.3
	Good	7	20.0	20.0	74.3
	Very well	9	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Of the 35 respondents, 40% (n=14) said to have poor writing skills in the Hmong language, 14.3% (n=5) said to have so so writing skills in Hmong, 20% (n=7) indicated to have good writing skills in Hmong, and 25.7% (n=9) indicated that they write in Hmong very well (see table 4).

Table 5

*How Well do You Speak English*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Poor	14	40.0	40.0	40.0
So so	10	28.6	28.6	68.6
Good	2	5.7	5.7	74.3
Very well	9	25.7	25.7	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Of the 35 respondents, 25.7% (n=9) indicated that they spoke English very well, 5.7% (n=2) indicated that they spoke English good, 28.6% (n=10) indicated that they spoke English so so, and 40% (n=14) indicated that they spoke English poorly (see table 5).

Table 6

*How Well do you Write English*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	19	54.3	54.3	54.3
	So so	5	14.3	14.3	68.6
	Good	3	8.6	8.6	77.1
	Very well	8	22.9	22.9	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Of the 35 respondents, 54.3% (n=19) specified that they had poor writing skills in English, 14.3% (n=5) responded to have so so writing skills in English, 8.6% (n=3) responded to have good writing skills in English, and 22.9% (n=8) responded that they write in English very well (see table 6). The researchers found this interesting because they had suspected that many more former Hmong refugees would be able to write in Hmong; nevertheless, the findings showed that majority of the former Hmong refugees were not able to write in Hmong. The reason for this outcome could be that the respondents had never received any education while living in Laos, Thailand, or the United States.

Table 7

*Religion of Respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Animism/shamanism	17	48.6	48.6	48.6
	Christian missionary and Alliance	7	20.0	20.0	68.6
	LDS/Mormon	7	20.0	20.0	88.6
	Others	4	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked about their current faith or belief system. The results showed that 48.6% (n=17) indicated animism/shamanism, 20% (n=7) indicated Christian Missionary and Alliance, 20% (n=7) indicated Catholic, 20% (n=7) indicated LDS/Mormon, and 11.4% (n=4) indicated as others (see table 7). The respondents' different backgrounds while residing in Laos or Thailand could account for this result. Many of the respondents may have kept their belief system when they arrived in the United States, while others converted. About half of the respondents still hold the same belief system of animism/shamanism perhaps because they had practiced this belief while residing in Laos and/or Thailand.

### **Specific Findings**

The researchers' primary purpose is to examine the former Hmong refugees' level of assimilation and acculturation into mainstream society. To examine their level of

assimilation and acculturation, the respondents were asked a series of questions to help determine to what extent they had begun their integration into society.

Table 8

*Respondents who Can Drive*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	25	71.4	71.4	71.4
No	10	28.6	28.6	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked if they could drive a vehicle and 71.4% (n=25) indicated yes, while 28.6% (n=10) indicated no (see table 8).

Table 9

*Respondents who Own a Car*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	21	60.0	60.0	60.0
No	14	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

In addition, 60% (n=21) of the respondents reported that they owned a car, while 40% (n=14) reported they did not own a car. This finding was surprising to the researchers because this figure far exceeded their expectations (see table 9).

Table 10

*Respondents who Own a Home*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	11	31.4	31.4	31.4
No	24	68.6	68.6	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

On the other hand, of the 35 respondents, 31.4% (n=11) responded that they own a home, while 68.9% responded they did not own a home (see table 10). This was not surprising to the researchers because, as is common in Hmong culture, many former Hmong refugees may be living with relatives or their children.

Table 11

*Regular School Attendance of the Respondents*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	23	65.7	65.7	65.7
No	12	34.3	34.3	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were also asked about their education when they arrived in the United States. Of the 35 participants, 65.7% (n=23) indicated they received some type of

education besides English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and 34.3% (n=12) indicated they did not receive any education (see table 11).

Table 12

*Level of Education of the Respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than high school graduate	12	34.3	52.2	52.2
	High school graduate	4	11.4	17.4	69.6
	College graduate	7	20.0	30.4	100.0
	Total	23	65.7	100.0	
Missing	System	12	34.3		
Total		35	100.0		

Of the 23 participants who did attend school, 52.2% (n=12) indicated their level of education was less than a high school graduate, 17.4% (n=4) indicated they received a high school diploma, and 30.4% (n=7) indicated they received a college degree (see table 12). Some of the college degrees that the respondents received were associates, bachelor's, and master's degrees. The researchers did not anticipate that more than half of the participants attended school when they first arrived in the United States.

By examining the variables stated above, the researchers concluded that some of the former Hmong refugees have to have some extent integrated into society. Some of them had the ability to own and drive a car and. This demonstrates that they were able

integrate into society by providing their own transportation. Before arriving in the United States, many Hmong people did not have means for transportation because they lived in a jungle environment without domestic transportation infrastructure. Being able to drive and own a car should be considered an accomplishment because they may not have had the opportunity before. Owning a home may also indicate acculturation and assimilation into society because the former Hmong refugees bought a house in which they know they will be living for a while. Also, many of the respondents did indicate that they received some education when they first arrived in the United States. Education may also have helped them to acculturate and assimilate into society by helping them be educated in the United States system.

Table 13

*Utilization of Community-Based Organizations of the Respondents*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	13	37.1	37.1	37.1
No	22	62.9	62.9	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Another purpose the researchers examined was former Hmong refugees' utilization of community-based organizations and their perspectives of the organizations' resourcefulness. To examine this purpose, the respondents were asked if they utilized community-based organizations. 37.1% (n=13) specified yes, while 62.9% (n=22) specified no (see table 13).



Table 14

*How Respondents Hear About Agencies*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Word of mouth	9	25.7	69.2	69.2
	Radio/ T.V	4	11.4	30.8	100.0
	Total	13	37.1	100.0	
Missing	System	22	62.9		
Total		35	100.0		

Of the 22 respondents who did not utilize organizations, many of them stated they usually have their children or relatives translate and help them. Of the 13 respondents who did utilize services, 69.2% (n=9) indicated they had heard about the agencies from word of mouth, and 30.8% (n=4) indicated they had heard about the agencies from the radio or television (see table 14).

Table 15

*Views of the Most Effective Ways to Become Aware of Community-based Organizations of the Respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Word of mouth	9	25.7	69.2	69.2
	Radio/ T.V.	3	8.6	23.1	92.3
	Others	1	2.9	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	37.1	100.0	
Missing	System	22	62.9		
Total		35	100.0		

When the 13 participants were asked about their views of the most effective ways to become aware of community based organizations, 69.2% (n=9) stated word of mouth, 23.1% (n=3) stated radio or television, and 7.7% (n=1) stated that other means were most effective (see table 15).

Table 16

*Community-Based Organizations Resourcefulness to Respondents*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	27	77.1	77.1	77.1
No	2	5.7	5.7	82.9
Don't know	6	17.1	17.1	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked if they believed community-based organizations were resourceful. Of the 35 respondents, 77.1% (n=27) indicated yes, 5.7% (n=2) indicated no, and 17.1% (n=6) indicated they did not know (see table 16). Even though the majority of the participants indicated that they did believe that community-based organizations were resourceful, they stated that they did not utilize services because they had their children translate paperwork and meetings for them.

After examining the variables, the findings demonstrate that many of the respondents did not utilize community-based organizations. Many may not have utilized the available resources due in part to their reliance on children to translate. While residing in their homeland, they may not have had available government organizations to help them. They usually turned to their community and/or family for help instead. Even though many of the respondents did not utilize community-based organizations, they did state that they believe that community-based organizations are helpful.

Table 17

*Friends of Respondents \* Neighbors of the Respondents Crosstabulation*

			Neighbors of the respondents			Total
			Hmong	Asian	Others	
Friends of respondents	Hmong	Count	10	3	16	29
		% of Total	30.3%	9.1%	48.5%	87.9%
	Other Asian	Count	0	0	2	2
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	6.1%
	Other ethnicity	Count	0	0	2	2
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	6.1%
Total	Count	10	3	20	33	
	% of Total	30.3%	9.1%	60.6%	100.0%	

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.959 <sup>a</sup>	4	.565
Likelihood Ratio	4.360	4	.359
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.329	1	.127
N of Valid Cases	33		

a. 7 cells (77.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .18.

The third question the researchers examined was the relationship between former Hmong refugees and their friends and neighbors. Of the 33 respondents, 87.9% (n=29) indicated that their friends were Hmong, 6.1% (n=2) stated that their friends were other

Asians, and 6.1% (n=2) stated that their friends were other ethnicities. Concerning findings for Hmong neighbors, 30.3% (n=10) stated that their neighbors are Hmong, 9.1% (n=3) stated their neighbors are Asian, and 60.6% stated their neighbors are other ethnicities (see table 17).

The Pearson chi-square was used to examine the association between neighbor and friends. The Chi-square indicates that there is no significant association between the variable (Chi-square=2.959, df=4,  $p>.565$ ). Broadly, the result shows that the former Hmong refugees are assimilating into mainstream society just as much as other immigrants and refugee groups before them.

## Chapter 5

### **Summary and Recommendation**

#### **Overall Summary**

This chapter summarizes findings associated with the purpose of examining the former Hmong refugees in their process of acculturation and assimilation as they sought resettlement and strive to integrate into mainstream society. The chapter presents summary findings in demographics, levels of education obtained, and the utilization of community based organizations. It also explores implications on social policy and individual practice in the micro level. Suggestions from the researchers may contribute to the improvement of future research and may provide data regarding this demographic for future research.

From the mountains of Southeast Asia to the central valley of the Sacramento region, former Hmong refugees have come a long way to Americanize. From refugees to American immigrants, this population has sought to settle in America for many reasons. The Hmong came to America due their allied with the United States during the Vietnam War and the political persecution upon them after the CIA had left Laos. Whatever the reason for their flight, most adapted quickly to America's way of life while others slowly adapting to the new culture including learning a new language and readjusting to a strange land. One factor the findings demonstrate is that half of the former Hmong refugees still struggle to read and write in English. Tran, Nguyen, and Chan (2014) conducted their study with elderly Vietnamese, and found similar results, as most participants had little to no English comprehension.

Another statistic from the study showed 34% of the elderly participants have an education level less than that of high school graduates. This finding directly relates to their limited English abilities. According to Pfaff (1995), school was not available to many of the Hmong back in Laos. Therefore, earning an education in America is part of assimilating processes.

From the authors' findings, many of the refugees still rely on family members to provide translation and self-help. Although a few of the participants from the study believed that community-based organization can be helpful, they themselves have never utilized any agency resource. This fact perhaps contributes greatly to the Hmong elderly's reluctance or refusal to seek help from government or community-based organizations. There are many community based-organization agencies in the Sacramento region to assist the Hmong community; some of which are the Hmong Women Heritage Association, Lao Family, and Asian Resource Center to name a few.

As stated by Lazareivic, et al. (2012), many Yugoslavian refugees strived to live together in clustered areas to enrich their native culture and help each other acculturate in America. This is a similar result in our findings. Many of the elderly remain in similar communities to associate with their own ethnic group reestablishing their culture, language, and traditions. Many prefer and feel more comfortable amongst their own group versus other ethnicities and as Hmong refugees resettle in United States, many of the elderly still struggle to with the acculturation and assimilation issues (Yang, 2003).

## **Implications**

### **Macro Implication**

The macro implications for these refugees primarily concerns law makers' ability and motivation to continue to pass policies supporting the many programs that work to help strengthen the refugees to adjust. In regards to the impact on refugees, the policies continue to impact their educational, economical, and other basic needs that will be required for the proper acculturation and assimilation in this country. Although there are currently resources provided as a result of the federal and local governments, there are still many areas needing improvement to enhance the refugee's educational and economical skills as well as adaptation into society. The agencies benefiting from these policies can provide more free services to the refugees, which can be a key factor in supporting and advocating for them when the services are needed.

It is important that social workers understand the unending adjustment difficulties the former Hmong refugees. Awareness of their history as well as their struggle to adapt to the changes of a new land will help the social worker find the correct resources provided by government and non-governmental agencies. Being sensitive to their educational needs, healthcare issues, and economic needs can enable the refugees to use government and community agencies, and more importantly may provide more trust among Hmong refugees of the social work system.

### **Micro Implication**

On the micro level, there are implications for social workers working with former Hmong refugees, including the consideration of how these refugees still need to break the



cycle of social injustice, economic inequality and educational barriers to utilize programs and services. Placing a greater importance on community based-organizations to provide better outreach to the community can impact the number of Hmong refugees and non-refugees who actually use them. Many Hmong are underserved due to their unfamiliarity of available community resources. There are many organizations supporting Asian Americans and some specifically targeting the Hmong community locally in Sacramento, but many of the participants in our survey were not aware of these organizations and programs. Some knew of the organizations but chose not to use the services due to distrust. When there are more effective outreach programs generated by these organizations targeting this group of people, a ripple effect can occur. This Master's Project finds that 69% (n=9) mouth to mouth communication was the most effective way to become aware of the organization and programs which may cause some to benefit from their services and hopefully in turn impact the social work system through more informed Hmong refugees.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

For future research, the authors recommend focusing on community-based organizations and the populations they serve. Not many refugees can identify community based-organizations that provide services to help them acculturate and improve their well-being. Focusing on community based-organizations and the services they provide may improve the assimilation process living in their communities.

Another recommendation of the study is for increased research into the importance of the traditions and lifestyle of a culture as a tool for resilience. This may

raise awareness among social workers of the importance of culture and tradition, in addition to assimilation, as important client resources. We also recommend greater research, not only in one region, but in other areas, such as other former Hmong refugees' larger geographical settings. Focusing on a larger scale covering more areas of this population can also add more depth to the studies providing more insight as to the progression of this group here in the US.

Randomized sampling of this group of people can also produce different insights of how the Hmong people have progressed rather than focusing on a particular age range or geographic area. The data may show more significant results for all age groups and current situations, perhaps increasing generalizability of findings. Comparisons of the more than likely diverse data would show how different groups within the Hmong population have assimilated into the American culture.

Lastly, the researchers recommend a focus on other populations of former refugees from other countries, rather than just one minority group in Sacramento, to benefit future study. This would allow for evidence of the overall refugee process of assimilation as well as comparison between groups.

### **Study Limitations**

One clear limitation of this study was the use of a small sample size which did not establish sufficient findings either way. It did not show a significant range in the relationship to the data and limited the generalizability of findings to the larger Hmong population. Another possible limitation was the data gathered from the population group. The researchers only collected data from the elderly ages 35 and older and obtained

participants who attended the SHNY participants by the nonprofit and elderly stages. Additionally, the researchers were not able to measure the former refugee populations in different areas besides the Sacramento region, which could have provided broader measurement data. Also, with the non-random sampling method, some of the population had a slim chance of selection or it could not be accurately determined causing the data to possibly not be as strong since the researchers aimed at finding specific people who met their criteria by trying to sift through the mass number of people who attended SHNY. Lastly, the researchers felt that qualitative interviews would have been valuable in addition to the quantitative data collected to help understand the acculturation and dynamics of the refugees processes in depth.

## Appendix

## Research Questionnaires

- 1) The participants' gender
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Male
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Female
  
- 2) What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_/years-old
  
- 3) Do you remember how old you were when first arrive in the United States?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I do
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ No, I don't
  
  - c. If yes, what was your age? \_\_\_\_\_/years-old
  
- 4) What is your current faith or belief system?
  - a. Animism/shamanism
  - b. Christian Missionary and Alliance
  - c. Catholic
  - d. Baptist
  - e. LDS/Mormon
  - f. Others: (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) What is your current occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 6) What is your current marital status?
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Divorced
  - d. Others:\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 7) If married, is your spouse Hmong?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No. If no, what ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 8) How well do you speak Hmong?
  - a. Poor

- b. So so
- c. Good
- d. Very good

9) How well do you speak English?

- a. Poor
- b. So so
- c. Good
- d. Very good

10) How well do you write in Hmong?

- a. Poor
- b. So so
- c. Very good
- d. Good

11) How well do you write in English?

- a. Poor
- b. So so
- c. Good
- d. Very good

12) The language I speak the most at home is:

- a. Hmong
- b. English
- c. Both Hmong and English equally
- d. Others: \_\_\_\_\_

13) Who was your original sponsored to America?

- a. Organization such as church, American Red Cross
- b. Family members such as parents, siblings, children, spouse
- c. Others: \_\_\_\_\_

14) Are you currently able to drive?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. If no, explain:  
\_\_\_\_\_

15) Do you own a car?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16) Do you currently own a home?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17) Most of the friends you were associated with and talked to on regular basis are:

- a. Hmong
- b. Other Asian
- c. Other ethnicity
- d. American

18) Do you find it difficult to communicate with other Non-Asian?

- a. Yes, I do
- b. No, I do not
- c. Refuse to state

19) When needing help with personal or family needs such as health care or social services, had you utilized any of the following community-based organizations such as Hmong Women Heritage Association, Asian Resource, and Asian Pacific Community Counseling?

- a. Yes. If yes, which agency? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. No. If no, please explain and skip question #20, #21, #22 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

20) How did you hear about the agencies mentioned in question #19?

- a. Flyer
- b. Word of mouth
- c. Other: (Please specify source) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Radio/T.V

21) In your views, what is the most effective ways to become aware of community-based organizations?

- a. Flyer

- b. Word of mouth
- c. Other: (Please specify source)\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Radio/T.V

22) How often do you utilize community-based organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. Sometimes
- c. All the time

23) Do you find community-based organization resourceful?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

24) When looking for help with personal or family needs, how often you have had sought help from Hmong or other Asian social services programs?

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. All the time

25) Please tell me other governmental agencies or community-based organizations that you had utilized for personal or family needs (if any).

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26) After arriving in the United States, beyond English as Second Language classes, did you attend other regular school at all?

- a. Yes
- b. No (If No, skip question #27 and 28)

27) How much regular school were you able to accomplish in the United States?

- a. Less than high school graduate
- b. High school graduate
- c. Some college
- d. College graduate

- 28) If college graduates, what is the highest degree? \_\_\_\_\_/College degree
- 29) Based on your general sense, most of the people in your neighborhood consist primarily of:
- a. Hmong
  - b. Asian
  - c. Others: (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_
- 30) Do you celebrate typical American holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter?
- a. Yes
  - b. No. If No, please explain why? \_\_\_\_\_
- 31) Beyond Hmong food, how often does your family cook American food such as hamburger and hot dog?
- a. Rarely
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Often
  - d. Very often
- 32) If there's a health problem, do you would prefer herbal or western medicine?
- a. Herbal, please explain why? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Western, please explain why? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Both
- 33) Are you a citizen of United States of America?
- a. Yes
  - b. No (If no, skip question #34 and #35)
- 34) Did you obtain an English name during this process?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
- 35) Do you regularly participate in governmental events such as vote on Election Day?



- a. Yes
- b. No

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