

Yog peb txoj kev npau suav:
HMong Parents' Knowledge,
Support, and Confidence to Assist
their Undergraduate Student

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Abstract

Through brief conversational interviews with 26 HMong parents (16 mothers and 10 fathers), this qualitative study examined their knowledge, support, and confidence in assisting their student in higher education. Using a multi-step qualitative approach, five meta-themes emerged: a desire or dream for the future, *rau siab* (hard work), specifics about schoolwork, help with everything, and advice or encouragement. This study's findings added to a small, yet growing collection of literature based on HMong parents' engagement in their child's postsecondary education, with the findings aligning with and extending previous scholarship. In particular, the findings underscored the immense cultural influence and involvement that HMong parents have on their undergraduate students' educational lives.

Keywords: HMong parents, higher education, college knowledge, support, confidence

Who are HMong?

HMong are an ethnic group from Southeast Asia (Livo-Cha, 1991), many of whom relocated to the US between the 1970s and early 2000s as refugees of the Vietnam War (Yang, 2003). HMong were recruited by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the 1960s to gather intelligence about the North Vietnamese movement in Laos (Yang, 2003). Following the departure of the US from Laos and the end of the Vietnam War in the mid-1970s, HMong were persecuted and tortured (Livo & Cha, 1991), and many fled to Thailand. As refugees, HMong were pushed out of their home countries, resulting in most feeling that they had little to no control over their lives (Pernice & Brook, 1994). With no option to return home, many resettled in Western countries (i.e., US, France, Canada, and Australia), with the largest population resettling in the US (Yang, 2003). Relocation to the US changed a myriad of major life aspects for HMong clans and communities.

One major change was to the HMong family structure (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). Traditionally, HMong elders are placed in authority roles, and men are considered to be higher on the

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hierarchy than women (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). In addition, fathers are responsible for providing for the family, while mothers take care of the home and children (Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Moua, 2003). However, in the US, it is common for both parents to work, leading to HMong fathers experiencing a loss of familial leadership and mothers gaining a new role as financial contributors (Lor, 2013). Moreover, because most HMong parents have no formal education and limited English fluency, they often rely on their children to serve as translators, causing children to adopt adult-like responsibilities (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). These language barriers have also made it difficult for parents to assist their children with school activities, further shifting the parent-child relationship and family structure (Her et al., 2019).

HMong Parents and Education

In Laos, HMong were farmers who lived in remote villages with limited access to education (Inui, 2015) and little to no exposure to Western ideas (Chung & Lin, 1994). Only a few families could provide their children with education beyond elementary school, and this was often limited to only male children (Inui, 2015). In the refugee camps in Thailand, children could attend Thai elementary school, and adults could attend English and vocational-training classes (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). However, the HMong language remained their primary language (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). As a result, many HMong arrived in the US with low levels of formal education and literacy, which has limited their economic opportunities and has resulted in many HMong living in poverty (Hones, 1999; PEW Research Center, 2021). According to the PEW Research Center (2021), 57% of foreign-born HMong have a high school degree or lower, and only 43% indicate having English proficiency.

Due to these limited opportunities, life in poverty, and difficulty navigating U.S. systems, most HMong parents believe that obtaining an education will provide a way out of poverty (Vang, 2003), and they therefore strongly encourage their children to earn an education (Gloria et al., 2017; Her & Gloria, 2016). The PEW Research Center (2021) reported that among HMong individuals over 25 years old, 46% have a high school or equivalent degree, 31% have received an associate degree or have attended some college, 17% have received a bachelor's degree, and 6% have obtained a graduate degree. However, although HMong are gaining increased levels of educational attainment for a new immigrant group, they are still performing below other Asian groups in the US (PEW Research Center, 2021).

Theoretical Approach

This study's major questions align with the psychosociocultural (PSC) framework (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). As a meta-model, the approach emphasizes the context and interrelated and contextualized dimensions of psychological (self-beliefs), social (relationships and connections), and cultural (values and context) as the basis of understanding undergraduates' educational experiences and persistence processes. By focusing on students' non-cognitive educational processes, the dimensions collectively and individually interact to inform students' contextually-based processes (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). The three dimensions are conceptualized as interrelated and intertwined, as they equally and simultaneously inform each other. Although the model originated as a counseling approach for Latinx undergraduates (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000), the framework has also been successfully implemented with Asian American and HMong American undergraduates (Gloria et al., 2017; Sengkhamee et al., 2017). Extending the model to key stakeholders for HMong undergraduates, the model serves as the theoretical basis to qualitatively explore HMong parents' understanding of their students' educational experiences (Her et al., 2019) and quantitatively examine HMong parents' self-efficacy beliefs, expectations, and cultural values in relation to their

encouragement of their undergraduate students (Her & Gloria, 2016). To develop the current study's interview questions, we used the PSC approach to better understand HMong parents' knowledge (cultural context), support (social) and confidence (psychological) in assisting their children in higher education.

HMong Parents' Knowledge, Support and Confidence regarding Higher Education

HMong parents care deeply about and strongly emphasize the importance of education, particularly in terms of its relation to their children's ability to have a "good life" (Her et al. 2019). Because they want their children to have more than the difficult life they have experienced, they strive to support them by doing everything they can as parents. However, what they know about college, how they provide support, and how confident they are in successfully supporting their undergraduates warrant continued focus and are therefore addressed below to set this study's context. It is important to note that existing knowledge on the supportive roles and processes of HMong parents is mainly taken from information provided by HMong undergraduate students (e.g., Gloria et al., 2017; Juang & Meschke, 2017; Lor, 2008; Xiong & Lee, 2011; Xiong & Lam, 2013) and HMong parents who are involved in primary and secondary education (e.g., Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Lee & Green, 2008; Vue, 2020; Wathum-Ocama & Rose, 2002). As such, there remains a paucity of research on HMong parents specifically.

What HMong parents know about college (cultural)

HMong parents often do not know about what going to college entails or have little "college knowledge," as that their children are frequently the first in their families to attend college (Gecewicz et al., 2015). As such, having HMong parents take an assessment of *niam thiab txiv txoj kev txanij ntse* (parental wisdom) about college is a tangible way to create a culturally responsive and inclusive approach to support HMong parents and their children (Her et al., 2019). More specifically, HMong parents' cultural and contextual perspectives and knowledge warrant just as much emphasis as the practical elements of what college entails (e.g., credit loads, declaration of major; Her et al., 2019). It should be noted that HMong parents often emphasize that college is the path to a better future for one's family and community (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Lee, 2007; Vang, 2003) and that education is a privilege that many HMong parents were not afforded (Her et al., 2019). For example, the authors found that HMong parents expressed a strong opinion about what college can mean and provide for their children (e.g., to have a different life than their own, to not need to suffer hardships). However, it is still important to explore HMong parents' knowledge and perspectives of college and the subsequent ways in which they support their children.

HMong parents' support of their child in college (social)

Many HMong parents do not have a formal education and often doubt, downplay, and minimize their own role in their child's education (Her et al., 2019). Yet at the same time, they desire to know more about and to have an increased involvement in the educational setting (Her et al., 2019), which are processes aligned at the primary and secondary educational levels (Wathum-Ocama & Rose, 2002). In qualitative interviews with 18 HMong parents (eight sets of parents who were married and two single mothers) with a child or children in college, Her et al. (2019) found that mothers and fathers reported doing everything within their capacity to support their child's education. Parents mentioned not knowing English, not having a formal education, and not having the monetary means to pay for college as significant barriers that they faced, yet they also stressed that they would cook, clean, provide transportation at all hours, and provide as much financial support as possible to clear the path of practical obstacles so their children could focus on studying. Specifically, "[t]he actions and efforts of the parents were clear and meaningful despite the parents indicating that even though they did not

know the detail of the school process, they knew how their children were doing in school” (Her et al., 2019, p. 58). Central to the parents’ roles were providing connection to the values-based directives of *rau siab* (hard work), emphasizing familial capital (Yosso, 2005), and keeping their children close to the “pedagogies of the home” (i.e., teaching, values, and beliefs that stem from family and culture; Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 109). However, more knowledge about how HMong parents define their roles, how the roles are understood, and their confidence in successfully engaging with these roles is still needed.

HMong parent’s confidence in supporting their child in college (psychological)

Parents’ belief in their ability to successfully perform parenting roles is known as parental self-efficacy (Wittkowski et al., 2017). This process stems from the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to one’s confidence in completing a task, which can be increased by learning through the experience of others (i.e., vicarious learning) or by watching others perform the task (i.e., modeling; Bandura, 1977). Recent systemic reviews state that increased parental self-efficacy is related to an increase in the health and well-being of both children and parents (Albanese et al., 2019; Wittkowski et al., 2017). For example, in a study of 121 HMong parents, Her and Gloria (2016) found that HMong parents’ self-efficacy to parent successfully positively informs their educational encouragement of their children. Similarly, in Albanese et al.’s (2019) review of 115 studies addressing parental self-efficacy – mainly in relation to infants, young children, and high-school students – parental self-efficacy was found to have positive health and wellness outcomes. However, only one quantitative study to date explores the self-efficacy of HMong parents and its relation to the provision of educational encouragement for college-aged children. Ultimately, more knowledge about HMong parents’ sense of confidence in successfully engaging with tasks and behaviors that can assist their children across educational levels, particularly in college, is needed, particularly as HMong students increasingly enter higher education.

Study Purpose

This study’s purpose is to extend the current PSC understanding of HMong parents’ role in supporting their children in higher education. Although third-party observations (i.e., reports from HMong students) about HMong parents are helpful in terms of providing insight and understanding, little research has directly consulted with parents about their processes. As such, this study is based on conversational interviews with HMong parents in an attempt to understand their specific roles, knowledge of college, and confidence in successfully supporting their children. In particular, this study seeks to address the following questions: (1) what do HMong parents know about college (cultural context), (2) how do HMong parents’ support their children in college (social context), and (3) how confident are HMong parents in their ability to support their children in college (psychological context)? Because relatively little research exists about HMong parents’ processes specific to higher education (e.g., Her et al., 2019; Her & Gloria, 2016), this exploratory study provides directives to university personnel in relation to parent and family involvement on campus and subsequent community-based engagement and programming.

Methods

Setting and Participants

The interviews were conducted at a large university campus in Wisconsin. The participants were parents (mothers and fathers) attending a day-long college information event at the university. The university has a well-known Asian American Studies Certificate Program with an emphasis on HMong American Studies and an active HMong American Student Association. However, it is also

well-known among HMong communities that the HMong student population at the university is small (i.e., approximately 250 HMong undergraduate students), with several discriminatory incidents against the HMong student community taking place on campus.

A total of 26 HMong parents (16 mothers and 10 fathers) with a child soon to enter or currently in college participated in the interviews. The parents resided in the same county as the university or in neighboring counties and had an average age of 46.28 ($SD = 9.59$). A majority of the parents were born in Laos ($n = 22$), with the remaining being born in Thailand. Furthermore, a majority of the parents had lived in the US for 16 to 36 years ($M = 22.20$, $SD = 6.09$). When asked about their level of education in their homeland, almost half ($n = 12$, 48%) of the parents indicated that they had no formal schooling, with four having some grade school education (16%), six having an eighth-grade education, and only one having a high school education or GED (4%). Two parents (8%) did not provide this information. Finally, the parents reported having two to 14 children ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 2.69$), with most parents having at least one child currently in higher education.

Procedures

Before conducting the study, appropriate study approval was secured. Notably, all study interactions with the participating parents occurred in the HMong language (White dialect). The parents completed the necessary paperwork at the start of the event day, with clear directives and ongoing reminders that their interview responses had no bearing on their event day participation. Because the parents were on campus between program events, team members who also served as event hosts asked them three core questions about their knowledge, support, and confidence as a parent in the support of their child in higher education. All team members were introduced at the start of the event.

As part of the day's introduction, the parents were informed that a team member would approach them to listen to their narrative. Tapping into the idea of *niam thiab txiv txoj kev txawj ntse* (parental or elder wisdom), the brief and conversational interviews implemented core HMong values of respect. The interviewers engaged the parents by acknowledging their own role as HMong scholars, students, and *peb cov bluas* (the young people) who are expected to advance families and communities through education (Lee, 2007; Lor, 2008) and as children interested in learning from the expertise of parents. The parents' experiences were specifically honored as important cultural and familial capital (Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, through these conversational interviews, the parents were individually sought out and welcomed as members of the university community. Three interviewers, who asked the same question of each parent, documented the parents' responses. The questions were structured to elicit a short relay of information, and the interviewers were trained to write down the main ideas and actions described. This process is aligned with the HMong language process of linking verbs or serialization (i.e., connecting multiple verbs to describe a single event; Jarkey, 2015). Additionally, the interviews were completed early within the program day, and each interviewer was a native HMong language speaker who was also able to write in HMong. The responses included no identifying information about the parents except for whether the individual was a mother or father.

Protocol Questions

Each parent was asked three questions regarding their knowledge, support, and confidence in assisting their undergraduate student in higher education. The questions were as follows:

- *Koj paub dab tsi txog koj tus me nyuam txoj kev kawm ntawv qib siab?* (What do you know about your child's education?)
- *Koj txoj kev pab koj tus me nyuam txoj kev kawm ntawv qib siab yog dab tsis?* (What support do you provide for your child's education?)

- *Koj ntseeg npaum cas tias koj pab tau koj tus me nyuam txog kev kawm ntawv qib siab?* (How confident are you in assisting your child in higher education?)

Statement of Positionality

Acknowledging our research positionality is of the utmost importance for this qualitative study. Research positionality refers to the researchers' worldview and the position they adopt in regard to a particular research task or topic (Holmes, 2020). It also influences what the researchers choose to investigate, how the study is conducted, and its outcomes, as researchers are not separate from the social processes that they explore (Holmes, 2020). As researchers, we have a vested interest and collective focus regarding HMong scholarship. We hold the perspective that HMong parents are unrecognized sources of wisdom that can help facilitate the success of HMong undergraduates. The first author identifies as HMong and a refugee; grew up in the US in a two-parent, lower-income household; and has parents who have emphasized the importance of education throughout her life. As a result, she developed a keen interest in understanding cultural and familial factors of the educational success of underrepresented students. The first author has an emic or "insider" position (Holmes, 2020). She is part of the HMong community and recognizes that the behaviors and actions being studied are meaningful to her culture (Holmes, 2020). The advantages of an insider position are the ability to foster and form trusted relationships with the research participants and the ability to understand their lived experiences (Holmes, 2020). The second author is a Latina whose parents have emphasized education and the collective value of *familismo* (familial emphasis) throughout her life. When arriving in a high-context HMong setting and learning that their educational needs and concerns have been largely unaddressed, the second researcher expanded her research to include a focus on Hmong community strength within higher education. The topic of the current study is outside her cultural context, and her previous research has mainly focused on Latinx undergraduates' educational wellness, creation of academic families, and desire for spaces of wholistic belonging. She therefore holds an "outsider" position in relation to the HMong community, but she has an emotional connection to, scholarly interest in, and advocacy for HMong educational experiences given the mentoring and professional relationships she has formed (Holmes, 2020). Given our collective beliefs, insider and outsider positionalities, and scholarship on HMong educational experiences, we sought to balance our perspectives across all study elements.

Qualitative Approach

To analyze the HMong parents' responses, we used LeCompte's (2000) 5-step qualitative content analysis. First, the interviewers, who were bilingual, transcribed, translated (Hmong to English), cleaned, and de-identified the information. Next, the translated information was reviewed by the bilingual lead team member to ensure clear translations, particularly checking for terms and phrases that were figurative versus literal. Once audited for accurate translations, items were identified through careful line-by-line coding. The lead team member audited this unit of analysis, and the team worked to gain consensus on the items. In particular, a few items had a nuanced cultural meaning that needed team consultation and were therefore clarified through consensus. Next, groups and categories based on the line-by-line coding were used as the basis of the taxonomies of item sets. The fourth step involved determining emergent themes and patterns from the item sets. Finally, the researchers created meta-themes based on emergent themes and patterns. These processes were completed for all parents and then specific to mothers and fathers.

The researchers addressed the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through various processes. First, the researchers openly discussed biases and assumptions related to their own personal values and lived experiences throughout each stage of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Second, to ensure data accuracy and dependability, two research members transcribed and reviewed

all transcriptions. In particular, HMong-to-English translations that were culturally nuanced and did not have literal translation were discussed. The first author then completed a final audit of the transcriptions before the data analysis began. Third, the team worked individually and collectively during each stage of the analysis and reached a consensus before proceeding to the next stage. Finally, to address data transferability, the team included all parents who were at the event to represent a range of educational experiences with children at various educational levels (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Study’s Emergent Meta-Themes

In setting the context for the emergent themes, we acknowledged the nuances of the HMong cultural value of humility in relation to achievements and its effect on interpersonal interaction. Specifically, our study’s HMong parents responded in ways that evidence the core value of collectivistic interactions that emphasize family, community, and clan welfare among HMong community members and individuals (Tatman, 2004). Many HMong adults and elders have had limited access to education, with many having no formal education (Yang, 2003), as was the case for the parents in our study. The study’s questions were forthright in asking about the parents’ knowledge, actions, and confidence in assisting their children, and it was clear that these nuanced processes would inform how the respondents expressed themselves.

A total of five meta-themes emerged from across the three questions, and one theme emerged from the confidence question. For organizational purposes, the meta-themes and theme are presented in Table 1 and are discussed and elucidated with the parent narratives. It is important to note that a few single item concepts did not fit within any of the meta-themes or form themes. Each of these items came from different parents. The items included “recommending that students tell their parents about the parent day programming so they could attend (K),” “asking how to help as a mother (S),” “not knowing where to find financial assistance for school (C),” “being a good mother (C),” and “having to be both mother and father as a single mother (C).”

Table 1
HMong parents’ meta-themes and theme

Meta-Themes	Narrative Examples
A desire or dream for the future (K, S, C)	I know that a child should work hard. My child must work hard in college so that they will live better than me. I support [my child] by telling them to work hard in school so that they will have a good life and not be poor. My child will have a better life than the one I have or my parents had.
Rau Siab or hard work (K, S, C)	[I have a] strong belief in myself because my child has gone far. [My child’s success is] a reflection of my hard work and ability to support [them].
Schoolwork specifics (K & S)	For us, we don’t go to school. College is hard, not easy because they teach fast. College is hard, very hard. Others can do it. So can you. If you don’t understand something, then ask your teachers or your classmates.

Help everything (S & C)	with	I help with money, buy them clothes, support, help them drive to school so they are not worried. I will not let them worry, be hungry, and if they want a computer, I will find one.
Advice and encouragement (S & C)	and	I don't know English, so I support [my child] by telling them to work hard in school so that they will have a good life and not be poor. I tell them all that I know. I want them to know and to be able to do it.
Theme		Narrative Example
Lacking confidence yet still providing (C)		I don't know [if I can successfully help], but I know I can help with money, fix the car if needed.

Notes. K = knowledge; S = support; C = confidence.

Meta-themes

A desire or dream for the future (K, S, C)

The first meta-theme that the HMong parents resoundingly emphasized was a dream for their child to earn a higher education. The HMong parents knew that school, specifically college, would allow their child to obtain a good job and to have a better life than their own. One mother stated, “I want my child to get done with college. I want her to work hard to have a better life. All parents think like that. I work a hard job.” Although previous research has indicated that HMong parents want their child to not have a hard life like their own (Her et al., 2019), the component of a desire or dream emerged more fully in this study to contextualize how important earning an education is for the future. One father stated, “education is [the] future. Most valued dream for children is to be educated, to be different, so not like me.” Similarly, a mother simply stated about education, “*yog kev txoj kev npau suav*” (It’s my dream). Notably, the HMong parents were confident in this dream and were confident in their child’s ability to succeed. They consistently indicated that it was “important to believe as much as you can, believe that you can, and help as much as you can so child can achieve goal of education [for a better future].”

Rau siab or hard work (K, S, C)

Key to achieving the dream of education was the concept of *rau siab* or “hard work.” *Rau siab* is a concept that is greatly respected and valued within many HMong families (Het et al., 2019) and consistently emerged throughout the three questions. As a central cultural value for HMong individuals, *rau siab* is steeped in notions of perseverance: “to never give up” or “to keep trying or going.” This process of *rau siab* emerged with a nuanced differences for each question.

Within the knowledge question, the HMong parents stated that they know *rau siab* is needed for their child to do well in school and likewise that their child works and studies hard to reach their goals. As an example, one mother stated when talking about her daughter, “I know she works hard. She uses all her abilities.” Similarly, another mother stated, “Child works hard to reach goal. My child studies very hard.” Both mothers know that *rau siab* is needed for college, though their children’s *rau siab* involves complementary yet slightly different elements. Within the support question, the HMong parents identified their role as encouraging or motivating their child, providing clear and poignant statements such as “work hard, work hard in school, and don't miss school even if not good

in school." Finally, when asked about their confidence about *rau siab*, the parents identified knowing that their own *rau siab* is evidence of their child's *rau siab*. For instance, one mother stated, "I believe I have done well because they have said that my children behave well and have furthered their education." Similarly, a father stated, "I am confident in my *rau siab* because my child has gone far in education." Furthermore, this confidence in *rau siab* was identified as others, such as the university or HMong community members, pointing out their child's hard work or "seeing" their child's educational accomplishments (e.g., going to college, getting good grades) as evidence of this process. This finding is aligned with the concept of family reputation being advanced by education (Yang & Solhelm, 2008).

Schoolwork specifics (K & S)

In response to the knowledge and support questions, HMong parents consistently identified that they did not know about what going to college entails given their lack of formal education. Nevertheless, they knew about the specifics of their child's education, schoolwork, and what is needed to manage schoolwork in general. They knew that college is difficult and particularly stressful during finals. They also knew that their child is often worried and anxious about performing well in school. To support this understanding, HMong parents stated that they knew their child must sometimes ask others, such as faculty or tutors, for help. One father addressed how asking for help is a key process that requires a willingness to learn: "College is hard, very hard...If you don't understand something, then ask your teachers or your classmates. Don't be shy. Open your heart and ask."

Notably, HMong parents indicated that one of their key supportive roles is knowing the specifics of their child's education and schoolwork. They identified asking about grades, homework, and whether their child needs a tutor to help them do well and graduate. Likewise, they knew their child's major, career interests, and university programming. One parent stated, "My child works with [program name]. Both my daughters wanted to be [in the medical profession] at first. One of my daughters switched her major, as she didn't like [it] anymore. My daughter decided she wanted to help students in [program name] instead. This daughter will go get her masters and then her Ph.D."

Help with anything and everything, except academics (S & C)

HMong parents' investment and emphasis in their child's education involves not only knowing and supporting their schoolwork specifics but also a willingness to provide anything and everything possible, as was indicated in their responses to the support and confidence questions. Their all-encompassing help involves giving what money they can, making purchases such as buying clothes or a computer, providing transportation at all times of the day or night, providing and cooking food, babysitting, and performing household chores so their child could focus on their schoolwork. Providing such assistance is aligned with previous findings regarding how HMong parents support their college child (Her et al., 2019). In particular, providing food or cooking for their child is considered a key way to provide support and is a central process in HMong experience (Vue et al., 2011).

When addressing their confidence in assisting their child, the HMong parents indicated having confidence in helping with everything except academics. This finding is consistent with previous literature regarding HMong parents' struggles with the educational aspects of their child's high school (Lee & Green, 2008; Ngo, 2008) and postsecondary (Xiong & Lee, 2011) experiences. One parent stated, "[I] can help up to 50% of their education but not with educational activities, help with money, ask teachers about grades and know how they are doing. Help with food." Another aspect of helping with anything and everything was that the HMong parents rely on their child to clarify the type of help they require. One mother stated, "I don't know [how to help], but I believe I can help with money, anything she wants, needs, and asks. [I gave] ideas to better [her] education and [to] protect herself. She needs to ask me too, but [I] can't help [with] education [college], homework."

Advice and encouragement (S & C)

Complementary to providing everything and anything, HMong parents specifically indicated that they are confident in their ability to provide advice and encouragement. Because they have high educational expectations of their child (Xiong & Lee, 2011), HMong parents frequently provide their child with school-related advice and share stories of their own hardships to encourage their child to attend school. The idea of HMong parents sharing stories of hardship and struggle (e.g., being poor) as encouragement for their child to stay in school is aligned with previous findings wherein parents equated education with a better life (Her et al., 2019). One father in the present study stated, “I am very confident that I can help, I tell [my] child every day, so that [my child] does not suffer like me.” Likewise, one mother stated, “Support their strength with heart felt encouraging words, motivate them to have a better life.” The HMong parents’ advice and encouragement in relation to attending and staying in school was consistent and linked to the idea of their child having a better life than their own (e.g., a good life), a consistent finding in previous studies of HMong parents (Her et al., 2019; Juang & Metkse 2017; Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Vang, 2003).

Single Theme

Lacking confidence yet still providing

In addition to the five meta-themes, one theme emerged from the confidence questions. In describing their confidence to engage the roles, tasks, and energies needed to support their child, the HMong parents mentioned the process of *lacking the confidence to do something yet still providing or engaging the role*. For this process, HMong parents began some of their responses by stating that they “do not know how or if” they could successfully or confidently engage a necessary role for their child, but they also stated that they would do everything they could to provide support. In particular, they identified that because they do not know English nor have a formal education, they lack the confidence to support their child in certain ways but do as much as they can nonetheless. For example, one mother stated, “I do not know because I don't have a formal education, don't speak English, and need to wait for others to assist or help [with academics].” Similarly, another mother stated, “I believe I can help, but I don't have any idea. I know I need to be a good mom, I make food, wash clothes. [I] don't know the information but give what money I have so she doesn't suffer. I do what I can.” Although HMong parents (both mothers and fathers equally) indicated a lack of confidence, their responses indicate that they still want to do everything they can, even with uncertain parental self-efficacy.

Discussion and Implications

This study yielded findings that align with previous research, provided an increased understanding of cultural nuances relative to higher education, and used a new approach of brief conversational interviews with 26 HMong parents. As evidenced by the responses, HMong parents possess a great deal of knowledge about what is needed for college and how they can support their children. However, given that their knowledge mainly involves “cultural home knowledge” that could be applied to higher education as opposed to “college-specific knowledge,” they frequently undersold what they know. In other words, HMong parents have *niam txiv txoj kev txawj ntse* (HMong parents’ wisdom) to assist in the process of supporting their child, knowing more than they think they do or even knowing more than what they are willing to admit. Furthermore, historical and contextual experiences of struggles, sacrifice, and perseverance are key to their parental wisdom. With this in mind, university personnel and programming should not underestimate or undermine HMong

parents' knowledge, roles, and power in assisting their children to succeed in college. Likewise, it is necessary to create programming and ongoing community partnerships that recognize the foundational role and function of HMong parents (Her & Gloria, 2017).

Although HMong parents' knowledge was caveated by "not knowing English" and not having the same level of education as their children, they indicated a strong conviction and determination to do everything they could for their children, even in moments and situations in which they do not feel able or lack confidence. HMong parents seek to support their children (even when they are uncertain that their child will succeed) by "clearing a path" so their children can focus on their studies and therefore be as successful as possible. From cooking food to fixing the car to sharing stories about their hardships to motivate their children's *rau siab*, the parents frequently referenced their cultural and familial capital (Yosso, 2005), power, perseverance, and vulnerability. In this same way, university programming that accesses and centers familial cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) as part of HMong students' processes is needed. In particular, it is important to assure parents that their "emphasis on the home and support of their children's daily well-being" (i.e., non-academics) are key component of their children's academic success. This could help to successfully increase HMong parents' parental self-efficacy in assisting their children's postsecondary education. Furthermore, because efficacy has been found to mediate HMong parents' expectations and encouragement of their undergraduate children's education (Her & Gloria, 2016), it is important to bolster the idea that HMong parents' parental wisdom and work toward their "most valued and desired dream of education" are critical and complementary processes rather than secondary and irrelevant to university support.

Finally, the finding of *rau siab* as a key element of the educational process aligns with previous qualitative research involving HMong parents (Her et al., 2019). Centering the value in parent programming and emphasizing the wisdom of community and family capital warrants further consideration (Her et al., 2022; Yosso, 2005), as it was mentioned consistently across the parents' responses. Parents are aware that *rau siab* is a necessary element for college and that their children's *rau siab* is key to their success. In this same way, parents are willing to put in *rau siab* for their children, doing anything and everything they can to be of assistance. Notably, an element of extension in which *rau siab* emerged was the process of reflection. That is, the HMong parents' *rau siab* is reflected back to them by their children's *rau siab* and educational successes, which add to their increased sense of efficacy as parents. For example, one parent stated, "I have strong belief in myself because my child has gone far. This is a reflection of my hard work and ability to support my child." The *rau siab* and educational advances of their children allow the HMong parents to stand tall and feel as equally important as other parents with each subsequent success (Yang & Solhelm, 2008). Because naming one's success is not considered culturally appropriate or a valued collectivistic process within many HMong communities (Her, 1998), it should be questioned whether the brief conversational interviews may have allowed for different cultural interactions and acknowledgement of their *rau siab* successes. Indeed, the interviews seem to have provided the HMong parents with an opportunity to take credit for their hard work as well as how their children's hard work has reflected back on them.

Limitations and Future Research

Although clear and important concepts and narratives emerged from this study, the interviews were not audio-recorded or in-depth. The interviews were casual and conversational, with parents providing short responses. Because the interviews were conducted when parents were walking on campus, the process likely did not allow for a full disclosure of their narratives. However, the rapid interactions allowed for a different level of disclosure, given that the cultural negotiation of interactions was addressed differently. In full narrative interviews with HMong parents in a home

setting, substantial cultural negotiation of roles based on gender, age, and clan would be needed (Her et al., 2019) as part of the information asked and provided. For instance, in Her et al.'s (2019) home interviews with HMong parents, the fathers often led the responses, and the mothers often deferred to the fathers' responses, processes which are consistent within HMong social systems and family structures (Vang, 2003). While the study interactions with each parent were shorter in the present study, there was an opportunity to gain both individual and collective responses with a convergence of information. To support the confirmability of this study's findings, it is important to note that the findings of this study are aligned with those of scholars who have conducted extensive interviews with HMong parents (Her et al. 2019) as well as undergraduates who have reported about their own HMong parents (Gloria et al., 2017; Juang & Meschke, 2017; Lor, 2008; Xiong & Lee, 2011; Xiong & Lam, 2013). This study yielded findings that extend the extant literature, but it is also clear that the information warrants continued exploration to deepen and expand the findings.

Because the parents were approached as early as possible throughout the day, those who were approached later may have responded differently given the context of the day. Furthermore, the parents may have had an increased sense of confidence about their ability to support their children given that they were visiting a university; however, the extent to which this informed their responses was unclear. Likewise, the parents may have provided socially appropriate responses that portrayed them as "good parents" who have worked hard, sacrificed, and persevered for their families and children – commonly-known values and processes that are highly esteemed within HMong clans and communities.

Finally, a parent's age, degree of education (from no formal education to high school education), and number of children in higher education may have informed their responses. For example, it is likely that a parent with one child will have a different amount of time, resources, and opportunity at their disposal than a parent with four children. However, the wisdom and cultural directives of the parents are likely to be the same, including the importance of *rau siab* and the desire to pursue education regardless of educational level. Because existing information about HMong parents' roles in higher education primarily stems from college students' third-person accounts (Gloria et al., 2017; Juang & Meschke, 2017; Xiong & Lam, 2013; Xiong & Lee, 2011) and parents' own accounts of their children's primary and secondary education levels (Vue, 2020; Wathum-Ocama & Rose, 2002), additional research and a scoping review of the literature addressing HMong parents' educational engagement and processes may be needed to provide direction.

Conclusion

This study's findings underscore the importance of elevating HMong parents' wisdom to ensure that their confidence in their knowledge is just as strong on campus as it is in a home setting. It is clear from this study that universities must bring HMong parents onto campus to allow them to see that they have power and a place on campus, with a central role in the success of their children's college education. Allowing HMong parents to be confident that what they know and impart to their children as well as what they do for their children is relevant and important to their educational success. Notably, this study provides an extension of extant information and insight into HMong parents' roles and processes in relation to assisting the educational success of their undergraduate children. It is undeniable that HMong parents are highly invested in their children's ability to achieve a higher education and hold it as core desire – *yog peb txoj kev npau suav [it is our dream]*– for their children; for their family, clan, and community; and for the future of HMong young people as a whole.

Authors' Note

The term HMong, capitalizing the “H” and “M” is used to increase inclusivity of Green and White HMong dialects.

Yog peb txoj kev npau suav translates to “it is our dream,” referring to HMong parents’ desired dream of a future where their children could acquire an education

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