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ENHANCING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS OF HMONG ADOLESCENTS THROUGH GROUP WORK IN HIGH SCHOOL

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ENHANCING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS OF HMONG ADOLESCENTS THROUGH GROUP WORK IN HIGH SCHOOL

By

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Enhancing college and career readiness of Hmong adolescents through group work in high school

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This dissertation has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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Dr. Tracy Peed, Advisor

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION

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ABSTRACT

Hmong adolescents face many challenges during high school, particularly college and career readiness. School counselors are trained professionals who can help. This transcendental phenomenology study explored the lived experiences of six Hmong adolescents and how they make sense of college and career lessons in a group work format over six weeks. Data was collected through participant journals and interviews. Each participant interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Moustakas (1994) phenomenology method of data analysis. Five domains, sixteen themes, and three subthemes emerged. Family members are crucial influencers in college and career decision-making. Barriers include language, financial, family, culture, and cognitive strategies. All participants enjoyed the group experience, they each learned about their personalities and identities and suggested changes for future groups. College and career planning themes on how to pay for college, confidence about going to college, and their bicultural identity were found. Although all participants chose college as their path after high school, they did not have confidence in choosing a career. Lastly, the school environment, specifically the educators, was vital in supporting the participants. This study provides implications for practice and further research along with recommendations on how school counselors can better support Hmong adolescents with college and career readiness.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Hmong students face an array of challenges in school, and for Hmong adolescents who are determined to go to college, high schools are not supporting them with the academic skills and resources they need (Lee, 2002; Lee, 2006; Lor, 2018; Vang, 2005). Given the challenges Hmong students face during high school, targeted group work is an intervention that should be implemented by school counselors when helping them with college and career readiness. Group work with lessons that encourage members to actively discuss a shared topic together (Paone et al., 2008) can help create a space that builds collective rapport with the group members (Malott et al., 2019; Yalom, 2005).

Background

This section will start with a brief history of the Hmong people and how they settled in the U.S. and review their experiences with acculturation. Then, the challenges Hmong adolescents face will be discussed, along with how group work can be used as an intervention to support their college and career readiness needs. Finally, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research question will be stated. Lastly, the qualitative approach and lens of this study will be addressed.

Hmong History

Understanding the history of the Hmong can help build a better context as to why they are living in the U.S. The Hmong people are originally from the southern regions of China (Bliatout et al., 1990). During the Vietnam War (1954), the Hmong played a significant role in helping the U.S. CIA fight against the Pathet Lao government (Uba, 1994). In return for their services, there was an agreement that if the Hmong helped in this war, the U.S. would help them after. Unfortunately, the U.S. government struggled and pulled out of the war, leaving the

Hmong to suffer nearly defenseless. The Pathet Lao government then hunted and persecuted the Hmong, which forced them to leave their homes and hide in the jungles for safety. The Hmong people's identity changed when they became refugees. During this time, an estimated 35,000 Hmong died, and many sought shelter in refugee camps in Thailand. While in refugee camps, they had opportunities to relocate to the U.S. They sought this as an opportunity to better their lives and those of their children (Lor, 2018). The 2010 Census documented 260,073 Hmong living in the United States (Pfeifer et al, 2012). The 2020 Census documented 308,803 Hmong living in the U.S. That is nearly a growth of 50,000 in ten years. There has been much growth in the Hmong community. For example, the Hmong did not have a written alphabet system until 1953 and the first Hmong to earn their doctorate was not until 1972 (Yang, 2001). Here in the U.S. schools, Hmong students learned about the dominant culture, the primary English language, and American history while lacking learning opportunities and exposure to their native language, the practice of their culture, and history (DePouw, 2012; Yvonne, 2015). They had to assimilate and adapt their own culture to fit in with the dominant culture in their community. When trying to adapt and assimilate, Hmong adolescents experienced discomfort and challenges with academic achievement, educational attainment, and identity development (Endo, 2017; Her, 2014, Lor, 2018).

Acculturation

Acculturation is a significant challenge for the Hmong people (Tatman, 2004). For Asian Americans and specifically the Hmong, their cultural identity is highly impacted by acculturation since they were the least prepared to adjust to life here in the U.S. due to their long history of being oppressed (Tatman, 2004; Yang, 2001; Zhou et. al., 2009). Researchers Kim et al. (2009) described acculturation as a process immigrants take to adapt to the dominant culture (p. 132).

When adapting, immigrants are trying to retain their culture, behaviors, knowledge, and identity (e.g., refugees) while living in a dominant culture (Kim et al., 2009). Similarly, researchers Zhou et. al. (2009) described acculturation based on Leong & Lee's (2006) definition, which is when an immigrant identifies with the mainstream dominant culture (i.e., White American culture) and then how much they have integrated themselves into the dominant culture (p. 291). It is apparent that with acculturation, as the Hmong adapt, internalize, and process their personal experiences within the dominant culture, they start to see their own culture deteriorate (Zhou et. al, 2009). Sadly, acculturation has caused a great deal of significant mental health stress for the Hmong (Tatman, 2004). Based on the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (version 3), the most common diagnosis was not Post-traumatic Stress disorder or other traumas due to the Vietnam War; it was Chronic Adjustment disorder (Tatman, 2004). Researcher Lee (2013) found that Depression was the most studied in the literature, followed by two other conditions, Adjustment and Anxiety. As Hmong parents experience acculturation, their children face hardship in school.

Challenges of Hmong Adolescents

Many Hmong adolescents experience isolation, bicultural difficulties, a lack of engagement, a lack of language proficiency, a lack of appropriate teacher support, and they struggle with identity development (Endo, 2017; Her, 2014, Lee, 2002; Lee, 2006; Lor, 2018; Um, 2003; Vang, 2005; Yvonne, 2005). Historically, for most Hmong refugee families, the concept and idea of their children learning in an academic classroom was new, and with it came overwhelming adjustments and feelings that Hmong parents did not know how to manage and describe (Cerhan, 1990). Hmong parents often found it was a struggle to balance and support both sons and daughters while they attended school, as in previous practices, only boys were encouraged to attend school and study back in Laos while Hmong girls were encouraged to stay

home and work from home (Yang, 2001; Vang, personal communication, 2022). Hmong daughters were asked to stay home to support them with chores and work in the house (Yang, 2001; Vang, personal communication, 2022). Hmong adolescents are bicultural, and in schools, when they learn and experience the dominant culture, they lose sight of their own culture (Zhou et al., 2009). Public schools do not regularly teach Hmong history, which can be a barrier to learning about their own culture and validating their involvement in the war (DePouw, 2012; Kwan, 2015). Also, parental involvement is important to enhance and foster post-secondary and academic achievement for Hmong adolescents (Nguyen, 2013; Lee & Green, 2009), however Hmong parents struggle to support their children and understand the school system (Vang, 2005). Hmong parents depend on the educators at school for support, therefore educators must be capable of working and understanding the needs of Hmong students.

Nowadays, teachers and school counselors are unprepared to work with Hmong adolescents (DePouw, 2012; Vang, 2005). Hmong students often experience racial exclusion in schools (Kwan, 2015). Researcher Lor (2018) shared that Hmong adolescents felt discomfort in schools in the U.S. due to their lack of English skills. Teachers often overlook Hmong students because of their behaviors (e.g., reserved, perceived lack of motivation, and quiet) and they were often misplaced into lower-level classes, impacting their post-secondary plans (Lee, 2018; Lor, 2018; Um, 2003; Vang, 2005; Yeh, 2001). Due to this, researchers Ngo and Lee (2007) indicated that Hmong students were not prepared for college-level work, therefore impacting their academic skills and college and career readiness. Considering the many challenges Hmong adolescents experience, college and career readiness are major challenges, there are professionals in the schools who can support the needs of all students.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

School counselors are professionals who can help prepare Hmong adolescents for college and career readiness. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) stated in their Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2022) that they are to address and provide support and resources to meet the needs of every student, no matter their background. ASCA's (2019) Professional Standards and Competencies state that school counselors must demonstrate their understanding of how culture and social influences impact student success, along with respecting all students regardless of their race, tradition, and values (B-PF 6) and that every student should be able to graduate from high school and be prepared for any post-secondary option (M3). Even more, school counselors are encouraged to take the time to commit to learning about every student and understand cultural humility in addition to their limitations and biases when working with students (ASCA Professional Standards and Competencies, 2019). Additionally, ASCA's (2019) School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies also address creating and designing small group work to impact student behaviors to promote growth in areas of academic, personal, social, and career (BPF-1 d.). Similarly, Group work, as stated by ASCA (Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2022) A. 7. E asserts that school counselors are to provide equitable access and facilitation of short-term groups with a focus on student's academic achievement, postsecondary planning, social and emotional well-being, and career exploration. Equally important, ASCA's (2021) Student Standards on Mindsets and Behaviors (AMBSS) states that school counselors can deliver student standards through groups or individual meetings as appropriate for the student's developmental level. ASCA fully promotes school counselors in preparing every student to be college and career-ready after high school. In summary, ASCA advocates for school counselors to promote growth and development for every student they work

with, and one form of support they can offer for college and career readiness is through group work (Hines et al., 2020; Malott et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2017)

Group Work for Hmong Adolescents

Group work is an intervention that can expose students to resources and help them understand their social capital (Martinez et al., 2017; Simon et al., 2022). There is limited research on group work with Hmong adolescents; however, group work on other racial groups and student development demonstrates group work's efficacy (Gerrity & Delucia, 2007; Maree, 2019; Steen et al., 2008). Steen et al. (2008) found that a small group format is an effective way to address a variety of student needs, such as those related to developmental, career, and academics. Through small groups, students are allowed to interact with one another, receive support from one another, and help each other (Steen et al., 2014; Rippley & Goodnough, 2015). This increases their understanding of themselves and their personalities. Researchers Chiesa et al. (2016) found that for students who participated in groups about career exploration, they showed an increase with their career decision-making self-efficacy. Lastly, Martinez et al. (2017) found in their study that when a group curriculum was implemented in a class, it enhanced students' college aspirations and their career knowledge compared to individual lessons. Overall, group work has been documented as an effective intervention in promoting growth in college and career readiness.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the U.S. Department of Education's definition of the at-risk student, those who are limited in their English language proficiency, those who are from a family of lower socioeconomic status, those who are an ethnic minority, and those who are lower achieving in education, Hmong students typically fall into one or more of these criteria (Vang, 2005). In fact,

Her (2014) wrote that when the Hmong arrived, both parents and their children needed to develop and learn the English language. Furthermore, Her (2014) found that the Hmong, along with Cambodians and Laotians, were identified as having lower educational attainment than any other Southeast Asian Americans. As of 2019, Pew Research shows that only 17% of the Hmong population in the U.S. have a bachelor's degree, 31% attended some college, such as a 2-year college or career college, 17% of the Hmong population is living in poverty, and only 68% are English proficient (Pew Research, Educational Attainment of Hmong Population in the U.S., 2019). For the Hmong, being prepared for college and a profession is a challenge, and they need help. Often, Hmong parents are not aware of the resources available in the education system (Xiong & Lam, 2013). Hmong parents are acculturating differently than their children (Lee, 2013). School counselors are vital in preparing Hmong students for college and career readiness (Xiong & Lam, 2013). It is known that schools are not providing culturally responsive support, school professionals are not prepared, and they find it difficult to work with Hmong adolescents (Endo, 2017; DePouw, 2012; Um, 2003,). School counselors working in schools should be prepared with strategies and interventions to support and prepare every student to be college and career-ready (Her, 2014; Tatman, 2004; Xiong & Lam, 2013; Vang & Flores, 1999). Lastly, there is a lack of research and literature on school counselor work with Hmong adolescents, their experiences in group work, and the impact on college and career readiness. Therefore, finding sufficient evidence for application and intervention with this population is difficult.

Purpose of the Study

School counselors need to support every student (ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, 2019). They are leaders who need to be prepared culturally and equipped with the tools and resources to better support all students (ASCA Ethical Standards for

School Counselors, 2022). The focus of this study is on the impact of group work on Hmong adolescents and their college and career readiness. There is limited research and literature on college and career readiness planning for Hmong adolescents through group work. Therefore, a qualitative approach, transcendental phenomenology, was selected to capture the experience of the participants in group work.

Research Question

How do Hmong adolescents (participants) make sense of (or meaning around) their lived experiences at this Midwest high school receiving college and career support through group work?

Researcher Perspective

I identify as Hmong American; I was born in the U.S., and my parents came as refugees due to the Vietnam War as refugees. I am a proud first-generation student who has obtained both a baccalaureate and master's degree. I am bicultural and bilingual. I am a licensed school counselor with 15 years of school counseling experience. I graduated from a high school that was comprised of white, rural, middle-class students and families. My parents are blue-collar workers, but it was not by choice. Growing up, my siblings and I were consistently told that we had better opportunities here (the U.S.) than where they came from (Laos), so we should take advantage of our opportunities here. My parents are advocates for education and have always ensured we prioritized education over work. Although they promoted education, they did not understand how the American education experience influences and change someone. They also did not know the preparation, work, and skills required to be a school counselor.

My first school counseling experience was at a charter school with a student population that was predominantly Hmong. The charter school had a mission focused on retaining the

Hmong language and culture. I felt more accepted and understood, as I worked with Hmong education leaders who were principals, chief executive officers, and Hmong teachers because growing up, I never knew of any Hmong professionals in education with these roles. During this time, there was a rise and development of Hmong charter schools across the midwest. Although I didn't want to leave, I wanted to grow as a school counselor as I never had a team of school counselors with whom to discuss and exchange ideas. This led me to apply for a position at a suburban public school. Before I left the charter school, the principal and chief executive officer both reflected on my years with them and warned me of how public schools typically function and how culturally different they are. This was exactly my experience at the public school. Within the first few weeks, I was approached by white parents who were eager to meet me yet treated me with little respect. I felt microaggressions from teachers, parents, students, and administrators. I had to really reflect and adjust to this new white culture while trying to retain my identity, my beliefs, and my values. I truly felt I was not authentic, both personally and professionally. This school has a small population of Hmong students, who often expressed their desire to have me as their school counselor because we have a natural connection and how that was convenient for our student-counselor relationship, but they also knew their parents lacked the language and time to talk to the administration to make the counselor change. For the past ten years, I have been the only Hmong staff at this high school. Recently, district members and administrators hired the first Hmong administrator.

As a school counselor, I am biased and have presumptions that most Hmong students are not exposed to college and career options. Fouad and Kantamneni (2013) wrote a chapter in *Career Development and Counseling* by Brown and Lent (2013), indicating that career counseling developed from working with immigrants and those with limited resources who are

trying to acquire the American Dream. This matches the experience of Hmong as they too are trying to acquire the American Dream. I know Hmong students are encouraged to do well in school and go to college; however, the steps to reach those goals are not clearly paved for them and they are not fully aware the depth of skills and knowledge needed to be successful in college. I am biased that Hmong adolescents struggle with their identity of being bicultural, and when working with them individually, it is challenging as they often feel they have to choose a culture in order to form an identity. I know this feeling too, as I grew up being criticized as too white due to my speech and how I present myself by my parents and family elders, while the white professionals that I work with see me as not white enough or that I am the Hmong school counselor. I often have higher expectations and encourage Hmong students and first-generation college students more, especially when they have strong grades and do well academically. I try to understand countertransference, and I usually must suppress and withhold my personal opinions and reframe myself to focus on the needs of the students, given that Hmong students expect someone in my role, gender, and age to lecture, give advice, and offer suggestions. Coming from a collectivistic culture, I am a member of the Hmong community who is helping raise other Hmong youth in the community; therefore, I have the responsibility of being a biological parent or parent figure to them. Under the professional school counselor hat, I am here to meet the needs of every student when it comes to academic, personal, social, and career. As a doctoral student, I need to find resources that work for the Hmong and share them with the greater Hmong community. As a Hmong individual, I have been able to acquire an education that has led me to understand the blueprint of education more, and I anticipate sharing my experiences to help guide others. To better understand the experiences of Hmong adolescents and

how they experience group work and a college and career readiness curriculum, I will focus on a qualitative research method called phenomenology.

Phenomenology

Historically, the term ‘phenomenology’ was first conceptualized by Husserl in 1931 (Alase, 2017). Van Manen (1990) wrote about Hermeneutical phenomenology, which focuses on the participants and their lived experiences and how the researcher interprets them and Moustakas (1994) wrote about psychological phenomenology, which reframes and directs the focus on the participants' experiences rather than the researchers’ (Alase, 2017). Moustakas (1994) shared Giorgi’s two descriptive levels of qualitative research. The first level is acquiring original data through open-ended interview questions, and the second level is the researcher describing the themes of the experience based on analyzing and interpreting the participants’ stories or views.

Moustakas (1994) wrote that phenomenological research is human science research and emphasized the following: (1) phenomenology is the focus of how things appear naturally without any changes, (2) phenomenology focuses on the whole, (3) phenomenology aims to reveal the essence of a phenomenon that is discovered through intuition and reflection of the experience, (4) phenomenology describes only the detailed descriptions of the experience, (5) phenomenology designs interview questions that give a direction and concentration to the meaning of the experience and how it is described, (6) the subject and the object on the phenomenon are connected and there is a relationship, (7) the researcher’s values and beliefs can impact the perception and understanding of the phenomenon and what meaning is derived from it, (8) how the phenomenon is described is through the process of thinking, reflecting, and

judging, which are the main evidences of this phenomenological scientific investigation, and lastly, (9) the phenomenological research question is the driving force and guide for the research.

Moustakas (1994) shared that the researcher does not make assumptions about the research. The researcher constructs questions as a guide for the study, which leads to findings that provide the basis for additional research and analysis. Also, Moustakas (1994) mentioned that during phenomenological research, when observing participant behavior, there is a relationship between what we observe externally and what the participant is actually experiencing internally. Due to the limited research on Hmong adolescents and their college and career readiness experiences through group work, phenomenology is an approach that is fitting to capture the meaning-making of their lived experiences in groups. This study's lenses on college readiness and ASCA's mindsets will be discussed next.

Lens

The lens of this study will be twofold: Conley's (2008) four factors of student college readiness and ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (2021)(AMBSS). Dr. Conley is a professor, author, and director of the Center for Educational Policy Research at the University of Oregon, and his work on college readiness has been cited in many research studies. Conley (2008) described college readiness as entering college without taking any remedial classes. Even more, Conley (2008) described a college-ready student as a student who can understand expectations of college culture and level of engagement and can grasp the content knowledge they are given. Students must be able to understand the culture of college and how it is structured in order to be successful. Conley (2008) identified four factors that students must demonstrate to show readiness for college. (1) Cognitive strategies: How to analyze and interpret information; how accurate one's processing is; and how to reason, (2) Content knowledge:

Knowledge of the content, (3) Academic behaviors: self-control and self-management that include time, study skills, and awareness of one's abilities; and (4) Contextual skills and knowledge: how does one apply and adjust to college? Conley (2008) contends that a student who is ready for college is proficient in these four factors. However, the key foundation is in cognitive strategies (Conley, 2008; Her, 2014). Cognitive strategies posit that a student can formulate and solve problems, and they also know how to gather information to understand concepts to support and improve their reasoning and that of others. They are also able to interpret and analyze compelling and conflicting sides of information to discover shared thoughts and differences (Conley, 2008). Byrd and MacDonald (2005) found similar results on the college readiness of first-generation college students. They found that the participants emphasized reading, writing, and math skills as crucial to being successful in college. Even more, the participants felt that time management skills, the ability to plan and focus on a goal, and self-advocacy skills were equally crucial to being successful in college. Byrd & MacDonald (2005) also mentioned that self-advocacy skills were the most important for first-generation college students. These match Conley's (2008) factors of demonstrating college readiness, which also connects to ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (2021).

AMBSS (2021) was created in collaboration with ten professional organizations, including American College Testing (ACT) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). ACT is a national testing agency for college admissions, and CASEL is a social and emotional learning program developed to support all scholars with well-being. ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors consists of six mindset standards and thirty behavior standards. Mindset standards focus on school counselors to help every student with lifelong learning, building confidence, and understanding one's well-being and the developing individual

self (ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, 2021). Behavior standards encourage the school counselor to focus on providing instruction and culturally appropriate counseling for every student (ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, 2021). The behavior standards are separated into three categories: learning strategies, self-management skills, and social skills. All 36 standards can be used by school counselors to assess how students develop and grow with K–12, college, career, and life readiness (ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, 2021). ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, learning strategies B-LS 1, 2, and 9 matches Conley's (2008) faces 1 and 2, while ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors learning strategies B-LS 3 and 4, Self-Management Skills B-SMS 1 and 2, and Mindsets M 5 and 6 matches Conley's (2008) factors 3 and 4. Both ASCA's Mindset and Behaviors (2021) and Conley's (2008) factors align when preparing students to be college- and career-ready. AMBSS (2021) is the backbone that drives the work of school counselors in preparing every student to have the knowledge, attitude, and skills needed to achieve academic success, college, and career readiness in addition to social and emotional development (ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, 2021). Combining both Conley's (2008) factors of college readiness and AMBSS (2021) ensures the curriculum developed for this study, at the core, will impact the development of college and career readiness for the participants.

It is important to understand and capture the lived experiences of Hmong adolescents and how they make sense of group work in order to adapt a college and career curriculum to meet their post-secondary needs. Hmong adolescents are bicultural individuals who are adaptive and resilient. It is the duty of school counselors to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate group work to authentically match and support their college and career readiness needs. This study is targeted to better understand and zoom in on the lived experiences of

Hmong adolescents in a suburban Midwest high school and how group work can impact the planning of their future outlook.

Terms:

- Acculturation: The process of retaining one's culture, behaviors, knowledge, and identity especially as refugees, while living in a dominant culture (Kim, Ng, & Ahn, 2009).
- Career Readiness: Students who are career-ready have the ability to understand their knowledge, their skills, and their attitudes to map and plan for their futures (Gysbers, 2013)
- College Readiness: The level of preparation a student needs in order to enter and be successful without any remediation in a credit-bearing general education course college (Conley, 2008).
- Hmong Adolescent: students in high school who identify as Hmong.
- Group Work: A counseling group involves several students who are working on shared tasks and goals, and who are developing supportive relationships with one another in a group setting (ASCA, The School Counselor and Group Counseling, (2020).
- Southeast Asian Americans: include Cambodian Americans, Hmong Americans, Laotian Americans, and Vietnamese Americans (Her, 2014).

Summary of Introduction

Chapter 1 addressed Hmong history, acculturation, and challenges in schools for Hmong adolescents. Particular focus was on Hmong adolescents, who are a member of the Southeast Asian group and are not a model minority, therefore typically facing challenges with education attainment and college and career readiness (Her, 2014; Xiong & Lam, 2013). Adolescents in general can benefit from interventions that are designed to support their career development and

build awareness (Turner & Lapan, 2013). Relative to Hmong adolescents, they should not be excluded and should be supported in discovering their career paths after high school (Lee & Green, 2009). Additionally, a broad review of group work and its impact on students' college and career readiness, the purpose of this study, the statement of the problem, the research question that will guide this study, the descriptive phenomenology qualitative method, the study lenses, and the researcher's perspective were all discussed.

Overview of Remaining Chapters

The following chapters will provide additional information to help build context for this study. Chapter two provides a review of the literature focused on the challenges Hmong adolescents face, their identity development, their college and career readiness of Hmong adolescents, and the impact of group work on adolescents, particularly from minoritized backgrounds. Chapter three will give a detailed description of the research method, participant selection, data collection and analysis procedures, researchers' backgrounds, group work sessions, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness and credibility. Chapter 4 will provide a presentation of the findings. Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the findings and limitations of the study, future research directions and recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will first focus on the research literature on how the Hmong experience acculturation. Secondly, the challenges Hmong adolescents experience in schools. Thirdly, how teacher perceptions impact their identity. Next, a description of how professionals are working to help Hmong adolescents with college and career readiness along with counseling. Lastly, a focus on the influence of group work will be described.

Acculturation

Researchers Zhou et al. (2009) mentioned that acculturation is multidimensional, which means there are layers of barriers that make experiencing acculturation even more difficult. Zhou et al. (2009) categorized the barriers as cognitive, affective, value orientation, communication, and practical. Cognitive barriers refer to how people are informed about their well-being. For Asian Americans, physical and psychological health are seen as one (Zhou et al., 2009). Also, Asian Americans believe that a balance of willpower and avoidance can reduce their mental health problems (Zhou et al., 2009). Affective barrier refers to Asian Americans' unwillingness to report problems due to embarrassment and shame, all to save the reputation of the family (family face) (Yeh, 2001; Zhou et al., 2009). This matches Hmong families as described by Bliatout et al. (1980) as face value is a highly important Hmong value. The value orientation barrier is another that refers to the cultural values of Asian Americans, such as collectivism and how the family is where one would receive emotional support rather than seeking support outside the family (Cerhan, 1990; Ngo et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2009). Communication barriers refer to how people behave and address themselves when giving a message (Zhou et al., 2009). Asian Americans prefer subtle and indirect communication, as this impacts their affective and value orientation to avoid shame and guilt (Zhou et al., 2009). Similarly, Vang (2005) stated that

Hmong students often present themselves as reserved in the classroom and how this impacts teacher's judgments of them. Lastly, practical barriers include a lack of knowledge of resources available, commitment, and priority level, a lack of culturally sensitive professionals, and a lack of bilingual mental health professionals (Zhou et al., 2009). These barriers, when combined or alone, can make it challenging, as people experience acculturation differently.

Sue et al. (1998) explained that there are two main groups of immigrants when acculturating. Some individuals are attached to and close to their native culture, while others are more Americanized. When an individual is Americanized, their values and lifestyle are harder to distinguish from their original culture (Sue et al, 1998). Furthermore, Sue et al. (1998) explained that individuals with higher levels of acculturation usually have higher self-esteem and stronger socialization connections with their families, and all of this typically leads to higher levels of psychological well-being. Less acculturated individuals may require more support due to experiencing more challenges and mental health concerns (Sue et al., 1998). Hmong adolescents have higher levels of acculturation, while their parents experienced lower levels of acculturation (Lee, 2013). This will be explained further in the following section. Lastly, counselors need to recognize the level of acculturation before recommending counseling services (Sue et al., 1998). Taking the time to understand how acculturation impacts the cultural practices of the Hmong can help professionals better understand the challenges they face.

A challenge during the acculturation process was the barrier of finding family members. Due to the war, finding family in a new country was very difficult since many were displaced from their homeland. The Hmong live all over the U.S., and the largest populations are in California (91,705) Minnesota (69,466), and Wisconsin (52,233) (U.S Census Bureau, 2020). The Hmong practice collectivistic beliefs; therefore, being a part of a community and depending

on the community for traditional practices was important. This led the Hmong to relocate after their settlement in the U.S. to live closer to family members. Although this increased available resources, support, and dependability from family members and those who share cultural practices and heritage, relocation brought about higher rates of unemployment and psychological issues (Cerhan, 1990). The Hmong faced challenges unknown to them and solutions that were difficult to acquire. Many of the issues pertained to challenges in schools.

Challenges Hmong Adolescents Face

There are many struggles Hmong students experience, and one of them is being bicultural. Hmong children are more focused on acculturating, while Hmong parents and elders struggle to maintain their cultural practices (Lee, 2013; Tatman, 2004). For example, the dominant culture here in the United States values individualism, personal rights, and privilege, while Asian Americans value collectivism, duty, and obligation (Zhou et al., 2009). Collier et al.'s. (2012) study emphasized intergenerational differences between Hmong elders and Hmong youth, where Hmong elders struggled to understand Hmong youth exhibiting Americanized behaviors. Hmong youth are influenced by the dominant culture's values and issues, such as feminism, a lack of significance and priority in the clan system, and the collectivistic practices of family members mediating issues, which are topics that are not significant to Hmong youth (Collier et al., 2012). Although Hmong students struggled with being bicultural, they have adapted to the dominant culture with the most success, while their parents and elders struggled (Cerhan, 1990; Lee, 2013). Hmong children were also exposed to the dominant culture at a very early age, where they were taught to read, write, and speak in English. When they come home, they only speak Hmong and are not learning ways to maintain it (Cerhan, 1990; Lee & Green, 2009). Through the Integrated Acculturation Model (IAM) as proposed by Garcia et al. (2020),

Hmong parents who were less acculturated match one part of the IAM model, Belonging, which is the psychological aspect of acculturation and refers to the degree to which an individual feels they are a part of the larger group, which in this case is the dominant culture. Overall, as parents saw their children adapting more to the dominant culture and feeling they belonged less to the dominant culture, there were differences between the parents and their children as they both tried to find balance in both cultures (Cerhan, 1990). These studies revealed and described the challenges Hmong adolescents faced when balancing two cultures.

Parent Engagement

Another challenge Hmong students faced was the lack of parental engagement in school. A study conducted by Lee & Green (2009) about Hmong parent involvement and support of high and low-achieving Hmong seniors in high school reported differences between the two groups. Group A was defined as high-achieving, and Group B was low-achieving. A student's grade point average (GPA) is used to measure student achievement. The mean GPA of Group A was 3.49 while the mean GPA of Group B was 2.00 (Lee & Green, 2009). Group A characteristics consisted of: parents gave them freedom to choose a social style; teachers gave money to their students as a reward for acquiring successful grades from kindergarten through high school; and Hmong seniors had a clear post-secondary path after high school. These students had a clear goal to achieve. Students in Group B faced the following challenges: Parents did not approve of their social style; parents only gave money as a reward when they were younger, and students believed that if their parents were more involved in their studies in high school, they would have done better academically. The students did not have a clearly defined path, even 10-15 years after high school, and had a more negative attitude towards education and post-secondary planning. Common themes among parents in both groups include parents involvement in their

school and academic work from elementary to middle school; however, when high school came, it was harder for parents to be engaged, such as attending conferences and other school events; all parents believed in an authoritative parenting style; and all parents depended on the school for academic and college support. Hmong students who wanted something bigger and better after high school had a path to follow, and their goals were more clearly defined. Also, this study demonstrated the impact of parental influence on their students, along with the significance of school staff members and their role in preparing students for a post-secondary plan, and implies that there are more career exploration options for Hmong students. Similarly, in two separate studies on Hmong parent involvement in schools, Vang (2005) found that, as much as Hmong parents wanted to help their students with school, they were limited by language and lacked knowledge of the school system. Furthermore, Nguyen (2013) found that if parents were able to learn more about strategies and interventions to help their students in school, they believed they would be able to help support their students to be more successful in school. These studies showed that Hmong parents want to be involved and believe their involvement is crucial to the success of their students; however, there are barriers such as language, a lack of school resources, and a limited understanding of the interventions to support their students with schooling.

Help Seeking in the Schools

A study by Yeh (2001) showed that when Asian American students did seek help from their school counselor, it was due to academic concerns from parents. The study surveyed (n = 154) school counselors from the East Coast to gather their perceptions and experiences when working with Asian American students. The most common topics when Asian American students visited their school counselor were academic pressure, family, and cultural customs and

barriers (Yeh, 2001). The Asian American students coped with their challenges through internalizing issues, while only a few sought help from their school counselor. School counselors described Asian American students as hardworking/academic, quiet/guarded, family-oriented, compliant/obedient, intelligent, responsible, and sociable (Yeh, 2001, p. 355). This study suggested that school counselors faced challenges when working with Asian American students. These challenges include understanding Asian American students' values of counseling support, lack of an understanding of the reasons behind low parental involvement, cultural barriers, and Asian American students' lack of self-disclosure due to saving family face (Yeh, 2001). Although this paper is focused on Hmong adolescents, this study revealed that, on a broader level, with Asian American students, school counselors struggled to properly support them as well.

Teachers

Teachers struggle when working with Hmong adolescents. Through a critical race analysis of preparing teachers, researcher DePouw (2012) wrote about how race has impacted Hmong students in education and their opportunities. DePouw (2012) also wrote that white teachers all had lower academic expectations of Hmong students versus their white peers. Hmong students were also given less access to post-secondary information and preparation, and white teachers were also less likely to build and sustain a relationship with the parents of Hmong students (DePouw, 2012). Teachers were offering a less rigorous education, limiting exposure and gatekeeping vital post-secondary information, and they were lacking time to connect, build, and maintain relationships with Hmong students (DePouw, 2012). This created a school environment that made it hard for Hmong students to succeed (DePouw, 2012). Hmong students lacked access to Hmong-related curriculum and content because their schools did not provide it

(DePouw, 2012). Without providing Hmong-based content and curriculum, Hmong students learned more about the dominant culture than their own (Kwan, 2015). This led Hmong students to experience feeling alienated and isolated, leading some to believe their culture and their identity were deficient (DePouw, 2012; Lee, 2002). Similarly, author Lee (2002) wrote that cultural and language barriers between the school and the home caused Hmong students to feel left out, and they lacked belongingness to other students at school. Even more, Lee (2002) wrote that Hmong students did not feel supported by their teachers due to being seen as foreign, culturally deficient, or culturally different from their teachers. Sadly, Lee (2002) also wrote that teachers were referring Hmong students to English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers for cultural and academic support even though they were not identified as ESL (Lee, 2002). Author Knight (2008) found similar experiences, describing how teachers did not know how invested they should be since they were inadequately trained to support refugee and immigrant students. ESL teachers should not be the only professionals in the school capable of helping Hmong adolescents when teachers need additional support.

When teachers have low expectations or feel they are not able to support Hmong students, this may have a deep impact on their future outlook. Endo (2017) studied four Hmong males in high school and found that being labeled as at-risk and failing by their white teachers led them to internalize the low expectations from their white teachers and that their teachers struggled to know how to support them. Teachers often feel unprepared to support Hmong adolescents (Lee, 2002; Lor, 2018) which can lead to a lack of engagement by Hmong students. Hmong students who were not engaged with their class were found to have negative self-attitudes and perceptions about themselves, and they saw themselves as different from their peers (Vang, 2005). Unfortunately, teachers believed that once Hmong American students were

assimilated into the school culture, they would experience fewer problems and challenges (Lee, 2002).

Likewise, a study by Um (2003) of Asian American students revealed that many experience challenges in education. Um (2003) implemented a survey at UC Berkeley during a summit hosted by the Berkeley Southeast Asian Student Coalition. There were also four high schools represented. Results showed that 18% received no support from their high school teachers or counselors (Um, 2003). Additionally, Um (2003) reported that Asian American students were also rewarded for good behaviors and were denied access to high-achieving programs, which led to their inability to take courses that prepared them for college. Unfortunately, the students also expressed that school counselors provided college access information only to white students (Um, 2003). The participants shared that teachers and school counselors used their discretion in deciding to whom they wanted to give information, and it was mostly to white students, leaving Southeast Asian American students to find the resources themselves (Um, 2003). This created a lack of trust between the Asian American students and the teachers.

Identity

Hmong students are often misidentified as a part of the model minority; however, they are not (Her, 2014). Iannarelli (2014) suggested that the Hmong should be disaggregated from Asians to avoid being a member of the model minority. Researchers Sue et al. (1998) wrote that labeling all Asian and Pacific Islander Americans as the model minority is not correct as it is only based on the success of a few elite individuals, while the subgroups do not fit all Asians. Similarly, Sue (1994) wrote on Asian American mental health and health-seeking behaviors historically, stating how Asian Americans have been referred to as the model minority with no

regard to their history as they were victims of prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, the model minority term is used to describe public neglect and a lack of seeing the real struggles of the entire group (Sue et al., 1998). Not all Asian Americans are fully adapted, fully functioning in their society, immune to conflicts, and experiencing fewer adjustment issues (Sue, 1994). A model minority is usually about Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, and Korean Americans (Sue, 1994). The Hmong are not a member of the model minority and are experiencing this world differently by trying to maintain their own culture and ethnic group.

In a study by Nguyen (2013) on Hmong adolescents and their perceptions of Hmong ethnic pride, they found that pride was generated through affective and behavioral relationships among Hmong students and other Asian Americans. The collective pride during adolescence that was socially constructed is an example of why the Hmong and other Southeast Asians may get mixed in with or be misidentified as members of the model minority (Nguyen, 2013). Observationally, one's demonstration of pride informed others and in return, observing others' sense of pride informed their own (Nguyen, 2013). How other Asian American students expressed their pride impacted their feelings and how they expressed their pride in being Hmong. Hmong student's identities are socially constructed (Nguyen, 2013). Expressing Asian pride over ethnic-specific pride shows the collective identity amongst Asian Americans.

Hmong students are marginalized and isolated in schools (Lee, 2002). Teachers shared that if only the Hmong students would become more Americanized, they would be more like the white students (Lee, 2002). This implies white students are the benchmark for what is acceptable in school. Postsecondary institutions often whiten Hmong students for marketing and public display and tokenize their success as an institution that is diverse and that promotes inclusion (DePouw, 2012). Having a diverse campus allows white students to experience diversity, which

benefits them while creating opportunities for them to attend a university or college that is diverse. Hmong students being compared to white students is not appropriate for professionals, and it impacts their experiences of what it means to be Americanized (Collier et al., 2012; Sue et al., 1998).

Hmong students are compared to black students. Researcher Lee (2006) mentioned that Southeast Asian American students often go through blackening in schools where Hmong adolescents were described by teachers as assimilating into black culture, where their behaviors and attitudes were being evaluated instead of their academic achievements (Lee, 2006). Similarly, Nguyen (2013) described Hmong adolescents' identity formation as an internalization of youth culture rather than Hmong adolescents adopting black culture for acts of resistance. Hmong adolescents who were compared to black students identified themselves as ‘Pencils’ which means they are yellow on the outside, white in the middle, and black on the core (Nguyen, 2013). The challenges Hmong adolescents face continue into colleges and universities. Postsecondary institutions treated Hmong students like black students, especially when they advocated for more inclusivity and asked the university to increase Hmong-related course offerings or hire Hmong faculty (DePouw, 2012).

Even though Hmong students are compared to white and black students, Hmong adolescents struggle with their identity within their Hmong community. Lee (2001) described three identities Hmong adolescents struggle with: the dominant culture, their own culture, and their Hmong peer culture. Within their community, being around other Hmong students impacted identity development. Kwan (2015) found that Hmong students teased and bullied other Hmong students for using their native language. This forces Hmong students to make a difficult decision about whether to maintain or lose their culture and language due to the pressures from both sides.

These negative associations with the Hmong language implied there was shame, embarrassment, and uncertainty about using the native language (Kwan, 2015). Even more, the Hmong culture places a huge emphasis on face value (Bliatout et al., 1980; Yeh, 2001). Negative behaviors such as teasing, shaming, and bullying may lead Hmong students to use the dominant language more to fit in and reduce negative experiences from other Hmong students.

College and Career Readiness of Hmong Students

Researchers Attewell et al. (2006) described college readiness through understanding college remediation courses. These researchers stated that colleges found the need to offer remedial classes as a response to high schools that did not prepare their students for college, in particular, inner-city high schools. Attewell et al. (2006) also found that not only did students from lower socioeconomic status, poorly prepared high schools, or inner-city high schools take remedial coursework while in college, but many students with high skills also took remedial coursework. Even more, the researchers found that students who took remedial courses often completed less than 10 credits a semester; there was some interruption in their college education, such as leaving college for a semester or a year and then returning; the students also did not complete their college degree within the expected time frame; and these students often took longer than four years to complete a four-year degree (Attewell et al., 2006). Some students who took reading remediation courses in colleges were less likely to graduate, and their graduation rate was reduced by 6-7% (Attewell et al., 2006). This study shows the significance of how remedial courses impact college students and how they shape their career and college career timelines.

Factors Impacting Success

Authors Xiong & Lam (2013) studied factors that impact the success of Hmong college students. The Hmong participants shared three main barriers they experienced: academic, cultural, and financial. Academic barriers included students lacking information to navigate the educational system, students not seeking counseling support, and students lacking educational skills (Xiong & Lam, 2013). Cultural barriers consisted of students' obligations to their own culture, gender differences in the student's culture, and students struggling to find self-empowerment due to a lack of support toward college and career readiness (Xiong & Lam, 2013). Financial barriers included students who were not familiar with how one could afford a college education and the resources (Xiong & Lam, 2013). The researchers suggested students learn more about the college resources during college orientation, as it is important to know the resources sooner and to find current Hmong students as support, as it is important for Hmong students to meet other Hmong students on campus to establish connections (Xiong & Lam, 2013). Lastly, the study found that Hmong women struggled to be successful in graduate school due to cultural obligations (Xiong & Lam, 2013).

Family Support for College

Similar to Xiong & Lam (2013), researcher Thao (2009) studied Hmong families along with community influences on attitudes towards education and the career aspirations of Hmong female students. Results showed that Hmong parents wanted their children to have a career due to financial security. Participants also used their identity as a significant factor in their education and career. Participants also recognized that following their interests and being exposed to a variety of experiences led to the development of their careers. Lastly, participants also expressed a lack of college and career readiness, an absence of career role models, and little to no support when younger. This study shows the significance of helping Hmong adolescents recognize and

identify their interests, how exposure can lead to career choice, and how important it is for Hmong women to realize their identity as Hmong women through education. This study demonstrated that both Hmong male and female students identified with collectivistic values, and both were inspired by siblings who found a path toward college, as well as other family members giving guidance on college and career paths (Thao, 2009). This study (Thao, 2009) described how both Hmong men and women faced similar challenges; however, Hmong women were able to understand their identity more through college.

Within Hmong families, Hmong women were treated differently with college options. Iannarelli (2014) conducted a study on Hmong college students attending a technical college and compared the success level between Hmong and white students in addition to how Hmong men and Hmong women were treated by their teachers and immediate family members. One measurement included reviewing the grade point average (GPA). Highlights from this study revealed that Hmong students' GPA was typically lower than that of white students, and successful Hmong students had supportive families. Hmong men reported higher support from family members, while Hmong women reported less (Iannarelli, 2014). When it came to teacher support, 72.41% of Hmong females reported more support from teachers throughout elementary, middle, and high school, while only 56.25% of males indicated support from teachers (Iannarelli, 2014). These teachers also encouraged the students to pursue higher education. This study (Iannarelli, 2014) demonstrates how academic skills taught and acquired in high school and the support from teachers in high school have a long-term impact on college success and career development. More importantly, this study emphasized how some teachers treat and support Hmong men and Hmong women versus immediate Hmong family members when pursuing higher education (Iannarelli, 2014). Hmong men lack support from teachers but receive more

support from their parents, while Hmong women are getting more support from their teachers while lacking support from their parents (Iannarelli, 2014). This study may also imply that Hmong women who pursue an education may seek more support from outside the family since they are not getting support from their family.

Another example is the study by Yang (2014) focused on themes in the career development of 1.5-generation Hmong American women. Results showed that for both educational and career aspirations, the home is where there is a large emphasis on educational attainment, with many lectures and expectations from parents, mostly the father. Family members and extended family members also influence education expectations. Family hardships, poverty, and oppression influence their educational and career expectations. Similar studies by Lee (1997) on Hmong women's pursuit of higher education found that Hmong women believed a college education was key to a financially secure future and a road toward independence and Thao's (2017) study on Hmong female college students realized that as they pursued college, they realized that there was more to being a Hmong woman than just being a housewife and the challenges they faced, such as college, gender roles, identity, marriage, and balancing two cultures. These results are matched by the next study.

In a similar study, Surla & Poon (2015) studied the social influences on Filipino American and Southeast Asian American college students in Chicago and how family and school programs helped support them in college and post-secondary planning. The researchers made a variety of key points: They found that the desire for students to attend college came from the family. College was described and seen as the gateway to financial stability and mobility. The decision to go to college was a collective choice and not an individual one due to the culture. If a student's parents did not go to college, they sought out other relatives who went to college as

influences. Students also depended on those who went to college as resources. Students who were part of programs such as AVID and POSSE applied to four or more colleges. And lastly, the students felt their schools did not have enough resources for them to navigate the college planning, application, and financial aid process.

All school professionals are pivotal in the success of Hmong students to be college and career ready (DePouw, 2012; Um, 2003; Vang, 2005; Endo, 2017; Her, 2014; Lee, 2006). Research on Hmong adolescents remains a major area that warrants the attention of researchers (Tatman, 2004; Vang, 2005; Vang, 2016, Xiong & Lee, 2011). Studies have primarily focused on Asian American students, whose population varied between different Asian ethnicities such as Chinese, Korean, and Filipino students (Her, 2014; Kim et al., 2009: Lee, 2006; Shen, 2016; Solberg et al., 1994; Um, 2003; Yeh, 2001; Zhou & Siu, 2009). The term Asian American is a broad concept, suggesting that a more focused examination of Hmong individuals will expand the unique understanding of this specific ethnic community.

Counseling for Hmong Adolescents

It is important to note that this dissertation is focused on Hmong adolescents, and the inclusion criteria include any Hmong adolescent who identifies as Hmong. There is no distinction between Hmong refugee participants or Hmong who were first- or second-generation participants. This section will explore the limited research and adjacent research on Hmong mental health and postsecondary experiences.

Mental Health

Mental health in the Hmong community is a concern and their main form of support is through the family, not a counselor through therapy (Lor, 2008; Taman, 2004; Vue, 2021) The Hmong do have a general understanding of mental health; however, many do not seek it

(Bliatout, 1980). Researcher Tatman (2004) wrote that Western therapy will not work with the Hmong population and believes therapy will be a last resort for them. One powerful reason includes the fact that self-disclosure and expressing emotions, especially to a stranger, are viewed negatively (Tatman, 2004). The Hmong prefer offering a direct solution that is concrete (Tatman, 2004). Providing assessments may not address the problem; an actual plan for a solution is more of a priority and meaningful (Tatman, 2004). The Hmong people identify the family as the main source of support (Tatman, 2004). This matches Xiong & Lam's (2013) findings that indicated support directly from the family and not from the school resources is preferred, and that the next closest source of support is other Hmong students' peers. This research implies that within the school setting, referring a Hmong adolescent for therapy may not be a solution, and the school counselor will need to be culturally aware of how Hmong families perceive a referral for therapy for mental health concerns.

Researcher Vue (2021) did a study on how Hmong college students made meaning of and memorialized trauma. Vue (2021) examined the issues through a cultural show performed by the Hmong American Student College organization and then interviewed a sample of the attendees. Vue (2021) wrote that many Hmong students have heard stories about war, ethnicity, and culture from their parents and elders. When Hmong people recalled these memories, responses of equitableness, resolutions, and restorative healing were usually what they were seeking to comfort their feelings. When Hmong students and others in the dominant culture do not recognize and validate Hmong Americans and their involvement in the war and U.S. history, they then do not remember and do not have the knowledge to share to help others understand. For Hmong students to learn about their history, the school curriculum faced the challenge of accurately educating them about the war, Hmong beliefs, and Hmong culture due to

inaccessibility (Vue, 2021). Remembering helps instill hope and builds a sense of belonging for students and refugees (Vue, 2021). The history and the experiences the Hmong went through show they experienced mental health issues but coped within the family for support.

Lor (2008) studied Hmong student's experiences with college matriculation. Lor (2008) concluded with five clusters as a blueprint for college success, called the Hmong Student Model. One cluster is the role of family support when it comes to seeking counseling and outside support. Another cluster is the involvement and collaborative work that teachers, instructors, and counselors depict in the lives of Hmong students. Participants shared that some were meeting with their school counselor throughout middle and high school, which led them to continue to seek support from a counselor in college. This study is an example of how school counselors' involvement with Hmong adolescents can now have a long-term impact during postsecondary.

Only one study was found examined mental health, and group work was used to discover how Hmong people in a small Midwest town experience and understand mental health. Collier et al. (2012) conducted a study on assessing Hmong mental health needs with a group of Hmong participants (n = 28). They found that the participant's awareness and understanding of mental health were limited, and it was often mistaken for psychological or social issues. Participants described symptoms relative to depression, anxiety, and emotional isolation (Collier et al., 2012). The sample also shared that there is no single term in the Hmong language for depression (Collier et al., 2012). The English-speaking members in the sample said that when a Hmong person is going through mental health concerns, traditionally, the Hmong would assume there is an evil spirit taking over that individual's body (Collier et al., 2012). Due to this, a shaman would be asked to force the spirit out instead of seeking mental health support (Collier et al., 2012). Furthermore, herbs and/or Hmong religious congregations were also sought for help. The sample

mentioned that they felt therapy and medication would be a quick fix but were not a solution they preferred (Collier et al., 2012). The participants also expressed a lack of Hmong mental health therapists and therapists who understand Hmong people and how their culture impacts their decision to commit (Collier et al., 2012). For the sample members who did attempt therapy, they expressed barriers dealing with transportation, a lack of language, and therapists who were not responsive and lacked understanding of their needs (Collier et al., 2012). Researchers also found that Hmong participants were reluctant to share their personal and emotional problems. This study demonstrated the need for school counselors to be culturally responsive when working with students (ASCA Professional Standards and Competencies B-PF 6 A & B, 2019).

Collectivism

Based on the research discussed above, educators need to know that Hmong adolescents may practice collectivism when dealing with challenges and issues they experience in school (Collier et al., 2012; Iannarelli, 2014; Lor, 2008; Taman, 2004; Thao, 2009; Vue, 2021; Xiong & Lam, 2013). For the Hmong, the practice of collectivism, clan association, and kinship is important (Cerhan, 1990; Ngo et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2009). The family is the core and serves as a source of support for all issues, including financial and cultural support for the family members (Ngo et al., 2018). Similar to the support a school counselor may offer, a study by Ngo et al. (2018) demonstrated an example where a Hmong male educator who was a media youth program advisor was seen as an older brother and a family member by Hmong youth attending the program. The Hmong male educator was identified as both a professional and an older brother to the Hmong youth, which can confuse boundaries; however, this was not an issue (Ngo et al., 2018). Collectivity and working together as a group are part of Hmong culture; hence, the cultural connection the Hmong male educator had with the Hmong youth was vital to

maintaining a professional relationship with the Hmong youth (Ngo et al., 2018). In summary, it is important to know that the family is a main source of support for many issues when supporting Hmong adolescents. When the educator maintained the group as a family rather than individuals in a group, this approach helped the Hmong youth navigate through their issues and family challenges (Ngo et al., 2018). Another important finding in this study that Ngo et al. (2018) demonstrated was that when professional educators of color shared a natural connection (i.e. race, ethnicity, language, cultural practices, and community) with students, this helped embed kinship and community into the learning environment and helped maintain strong rapport and relationships with the group members (Ngo et al., 2018, p. 1146). This study supported group work as an intervention and support for Hmong youth and how it matches and aligns with the cultural values of the Hmong.

Group Work

Group work is effective at all grade levels (Hayes, 2001). A study by Hayes (2001) investigating the effectiveness of group counseling in schools at all levels (K–12) found that students who attended group counseling were getting higher grades and believed that their education was an important goal and that groups could prepare them for something meaningful in their future. Although group work can be done at all levels, school counselors are offering groups mostly at the elementary level and not as much at the high school level (Steen et al., 2007). In a study examining whether school counselors offered and implemented group work in their school (n = 802) by Steen et al. (2007), the survey results showed that 87% of the participants conducted group work, with 61% at the elementary level and only 11% at the high school level. Many respondents expressed the significance of group work and therefore implemented it; however, many respondents also shared that they were unable to implement

group work due to a lack of time (Steen et al., 2007). This study clearly showed that school counselors do see the value of group work, especially at the elementary level, in meeting the needs of their students. Unfortunately, there is less group work being implemented at the high school level, which suggests the need for school counselors to advocate for more group counseling.

Group counseling can address an array of topics and issues (Bhat & Stevens, 2021, Hayes, 2001; Clark & Breman, 2009). These may include developmental, social, emotional, remediation, and academic issues and can help establish a healthier school climate (Perusse et al., 2009). Group work can target student needs and offer information based on the design by the school counselor (Perusse, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009). Groups also offer a safe place where group members receive attention and valuable feedback and allow them to process information (Hayes, 2001). Even more, group work is a direct service to students, and the ASCA national model for school counselors (2017) suggests that school counselors spend 80% of their time offering direct services (Bhat & Stevens, 2021).

The group work format is flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of the members. Paone et al. (2008), compared group activity therapy with group talk therapy for at-risk adolescents. The group activity therapy format allowed the members to discuss amongst themselves. Groups were structured with developmentally appropriate activities and self-directed activities. The group talk format was led by a counselor who would bring scenarios with a dilemma, and the group was given 45 minutes to process it together. Comparing these two approaches revealed that group activity therapy was more effective due to being more developmentally appropriate and impacted moral reasoning. The nature of group activity therapy

allowed the members to practice listening, collaboration, and cooperation, which engaged them more.

Group work for adolescents for post-secondary planning was found to have a positive impact, and group work helps establish positive peer relationships (Malott et al., 2019; Steen et al., 2014). Researchers Shi & Steen (2010) found that group work can be used to help ESL students improve their English proficiency and student behavior. Solberg et al. (1994) found in their study of Asian American groups (n = 596) which included mostly Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Taiwanese college students, that if Asian American students had previous counseling experience, this led to them being more willing to seek help and support for academic and interpersonal problems. This study demonstrated how targeted outreach for Asian American students can be helpful, as some Asian American students may not have had exposure to it to seek it.

Group work has demonstrated it is effective in career planning for adolescents (Chiesa et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2015; Malott et al., 2019; Maree, 2019; Martinez et al., 2017; Shi & Steen, 2010). In a study by Chiesa et al. (2016) on career decision-making self-efficacy at an Italian high school, results showed that having students participate in groups about career exploration increased their career decision-making self-efficacy and helped with their career exploration. A study by Maree (2019) found that group work led to improved career adaptability and impacted student aspirations and motivation about their future plans. Even in-class group guidance lessons that were infused with the use of social media and curriculum that increased engagement were effective in enhancing post-secondary readiness versus individual meetings due to the structure (Martinez et al., 2017). Choi et al. (2015) investigated Korean adolescent career development and how career interventions impacted adolescent planning. The researchers stated that the more

students participated in a variety of career interventions, the more their career skills developed, and they became more certain about their future careers. This then impacted how they approached their academics and school. Group work with a career-based curriculum can help adolescents be more prepared for their future.

In a similar study, Malott et al. (2019), ran a group (n = 11) for a predominantly African American adolescent youth group where 90% of the school's student population was considered underprivileged and meeting criteria for the free and reduced lunch program. The researchers planned eight sessions with the following topics: understanding and navigating university academic culture, social capital, time management, study skills, coping with failure, identity development, and how to respond to discrimination (Malott et al., 2019, p. 261). The group members felt the group was a safe space, experienced universality, felt more open to sharing and participating, and felt the group was authentic (Malott et al., 2019).

Similarly, Simon et al. (2022) implemented a college readiness program during the summer to help underserved students develop social and cultural capital through a six–week summer bridge program. During this time, participants were taught how to internalize the importance of working with others, especially professionals and educators; shared family stories to better understand drive and motivation; and personal narratives to validate group experience and relationships. The researchers found that grouping students together builds social capital, and building and maintaining connections is important to building trust. Group work can build trust and lead to other discoveries.

Group work can be used to help address ethnic identity development (Malott et al., 2010). A study by Malott et al. (2010) targeted Latino adolescents and created eight group sessions that helped develop their identity. Results showed that participants learned more about themselves

and their identity, increased relational skills, and felt they established a better sense of Latino pride (Malott et al., 2010). They also expressed changing their perceptions and attitudes towards white people (Malott et al., 2010). Originally, the participants believed all white people were racists, and through group work sessions, they learned not to discriminate against white people (Malott et al., 2010). They also built rapport with one another. This study is an example of using group work to meet the cultural and diverse needs of students (Malott et al., 2010).

In summary, group work has been demonstrated to help with a variety of topics to help promote positive development for students in all grades. Even more, group work has been shown to be effective with diverse student populations (Chiesa et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2015; Malott et al., 2010).

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

ASCA recommends group work to be implemented by school counselors to promote student growth for college, career, and life readiness (ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors, 2022; ASCA's Professional Standards and Competencies, 2019; ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success, 2021). ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2022) recommends school counselors offer culturally sustaining small groups based on student needs along with access to groups (A.7. a). In addition, ASCA's (2019) Professional Standards and Competencies and ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (2021) suggest using small groups to promote college and career development (B-PF-1, d). Lastly, group work is a Tier 2 intervention that school counselors can implement to meet the needs of students (Sink, 2016). Overall, school counselors have the support of ASCA to implement group work as a means to meet the needs of students.

Summary of Chapter

The Hmong struggle with acculturation (Lee, 2013; Zhou et al., 2009). Hmong elders and parents are seeing their children become more Americanized, with a lesser focus on their cultural practices and values (Collier et al., 2012; Sue et al., 1998). Although Hmong adolescents are more acculturated than their parents, they still face obstacles in school that make it difficult to be college and career ready, such as being bicultural (Lee, 2013; Tatman, 2004; Zhou et al., 2009, Yeh, 2001), lack of parent engagement in school (Knight, 2008; Lee & Green, 2009; Nguyen, 2013; Vang, 2005), teacher lack of preparedness in working with Hmong students (DePouw, 2012), and teachers with low expectations of students (Endo, 2017; DePouw, 2012; Lee, 2002; Um, 2003). Furthermore, Hmong students were often compared to white students (Lee, 2002) and black students (Lee, 2006), while simultaneously struggling to find their own identity within their community (Kwan, 2015). For Hmong college students, they continue to struggle with academic barriers, cultural barriers, and financial barriers (Xiong & Lam, 2013). Given the challenges the Hmong face, school counselors are professionals who can support Hmong adolescents with college and career readiness. Educators need to understand how Hmong practice collectivism when faced with challenges and issues in school (Ngo et al., 2018). Through group work, group participants mentioned many positive experiences such as safety, authenticity, and openness (Malott et al, 2019). Group work has been found to have a positive impact on college and career readiness (Maree, 2019; Martinez et al., 2017; Choi et al., 2015). Given that the Hmong come from a culture that practices collectivism, where issues are discussed amongst family members, the group work format is a natural support and match to their cultural practice (Ngo et al., 2018; Tatman, 2004; Xiong & Lam, 2013).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will explain the qualitative research method that will be used to guide this study. Details about the participants and inclusion criteria are explained. Consent and assent forms are described. Additional information about the Midwest school the participants attend will also be shared as context to help the reader understand the social capital that is available. Furthermore, some information on the researcher and research assistants and how they contribute to the study will be shared. The group sessions are explained in detail including how each session is connected to the lenses of Conley (2008) and ASCA's Student Standards: Mindsets and Behaviors (2021). Lastly, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations of the study are provided.

Method

Transcendental phenomenology principles were first identified by Husserl (1931) and then applied to qualitative research methods by Moustakas (1994). Transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand the human experience and the phenomenon that appears in the consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). A transcendental experience is first descriptive and then how ones seeks to understand it, the experience goes through phenomenological reduction to find the essence of the experience (Husserl, 1931). Some defining features of transcendental phenomenology included: the focus on a phenomenon as an occurrence, idea, or concept; the phenomenon being experienced either singly or by a group of individuals; Epoche which is bracketing (reflexivity) by the researcher; data collection through interviews of individuals who experience the phenomenon; moving the data from significant statements to meaning units that describe the phenomenon; and lastly, a description of the essence of the experience.

An empirical phenomenological approach requires the researcher to emphasize the experiences of the participants in order to acquire a deep understanding (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, data collection was done through long conversations, which are interviews (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews are interactive and consist of open-ended questions and comments. These interviews can start with a social conversation and a short activity that helps create a calm, relaxing, and trusting atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994, p. 128). Throughout the interview, the researcher focused on the experiences and moments of particular awareness that participants shared. Participants were asked to describe their experience with the phenomenon of participating in the small group in detail. The researcher was responsible for creating a climate where participants felt comfortable responding honestly.

Applying Moustakas (1994) features of phenomenology to this research, the phenomenon was how Hmong adolescents describe their experiences at their high school while receiving college and career support through group work. The exploration of the phenomenon was by a group of Hmong adolescent participants enrolled in a high school whose parents permitted them to participate in a small group. Epoche was achieved by the researcher during the study through reflexive journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). More on this will be discussed in the section below titled Ensuring Trustworthiness & Credibility. The data collection was done by interviewing the participants and their journal responses. Once the transcripts were completed, the data analysis included looking for horizons that lead to domains and themes, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). Lastly, once the themes were discovered by the researcher and the research assistants, descriptions of the essence of the experiences were written using the statements.

The acquired information for this research study will add to the research literature on interventions that influence Hmong adolescents, small group work in school counseling, and

college and career life readiness planning for Hmong students. Furthermore, this research will also contribute to and help other educators who work directly with Hmong adolescents on post-secondary readiness planning and group work. The data collected included participant journal entries and semi-structured interviews.

This research was conducted under two distinct lenses. The first lens was Conley's (2008) four factors of college readiness, specifically the factor of academic behaviors, which are how an individual works with self-control, self-management, awareness of study skills, and their own abilities. The second lens was ASCA's Student Success: Mindset and Behaviors (2021) **(**AMBSS, 2021) for K–12, college, career, and life readiness. Table 1 below shows how each group work session is linked to ASCA's Student Success: Mindset and Behaviors (2021). Given that Conley (2008) and AMBSS (2021) provide a framework from the dominant white culture, a secondary lens implemented in the lessons was from Xiong & Lam's (2013) study on the barriers Hmong students experience in college and Lor's (2008) The Hmong Student Model, which is a blueprint for college success.

Participants

Through purposive sampling (Smith et al., 2022), participants were Hmong adolescents enrolled at a suburban Midwest high school. The inclusion criteria for the participants were their availability based on their school schedule, identified as Hmong, and must be enrolled in the high school. Participants were only identified as Asian in the student information system, therefore, the main researcher used a list of Asian students and looked for individuals with last names that matched the Hmong 18 clans (Lee & Pfeifer, 2006). The variables: gender, age, socio-economic status, grade level, grade point average, other ethnicities, race, and religion were not part of the selection criteria. The majority of the Hmong students resided in an urban city and

were accepted to attend this Midwest high school through the open enrollment program. Out of 23 Hmong adolescents identified in grades 10th–12th, 6 students had schedules that allowed them time to participate in groups. Their ages ranged from 15 years old to 17 years old. Initially, eligible participants were sent a pass to meet to inform them about the group work study. During the first session, information cards were distributed to gather demographic information (Appendix C).

Consent and Assent

It was important to acquire consent from parents and assent from the participants, given they were under the age of 18 (Smith et al., 2022). Only those who have both signed informed consent and assent forms were allowed to participate in this study. Both the consent form (Appendix F) and the assent form (Appendix G) describe the topics that will be covered in the group. It was also important to inform the participants and their parents about what to expect from the group work, the interview, the journal entries, and the data analysis (Smith et al., 2022). Based on Tatman (2004) and Collier et al. (2012), Hmong parents may not fully understand the intention of group work; therefore, the researcher provided a video recording explaining the purpose and intention of the group along with the consent and assent information given to the students to show their parents how to limit the language barrier.

Midwest School

The midwest high school population of 1600 students is comprised of 55% white, 21% black, 10% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 7% other. Roughly 60% of students planned to attend a four-year college, 20% attended a two-year college, and roughly 20% attended a military, work, other, or undecided college. There were six licensed school counselors, two interns, and one college and career readiness coordinator who was hired in the spring of 2022. There are several

curricular and experiential opportunities for students at this high school: advancement via individual determination (AVID), advanced placement (AP), college in the schools through the University of Minnesota Twin Cities (CIS), and honors curriculum. The high school offered programs such as: Post-Secondary Education Options (PSEO) (allowed students to take college courses while in high school), Genesys Works (placed students in paid internships in addition to support with college planning), Project-Based Learning (students can acquire credits towards graduation through alternative curriculum), Collaborative Lab School (students can acquire credits outside of the classroom and other creative interactions outside of school), and ProPEL (an internship placement that also provides post-secondary planning support).

Researchers

This section will provide information on the researcher and the research assistants. I served as the main researcher for this study. I have several roles that warrant transparency. I am a doctoral student, I am a licensed school counselor, I was employed at this midwest high school, I am the researcher, I am a member of the Hmong community, and I was the group facilitator for this study. I have been a professional school counselor for a total of sixteen years. I have experience working with diverse populations in all grades, K-12. At the time of this research, I was employed at the midwest high school for twelve years with most being at the high school level. At the midwest high school, students are assigned to school counselors by alpha. None of the participants were assigned to me on my caseload, therefore I have not previous experience or history working with the participants. Being Hmong, I am also a member of the Hmong community and others may see me as an elder, an uncle, or an older sibling. I served as the group facilitator and conducted all six sessions, but I relied on a colleague for the group invitiation and screening to avoid a conflict of interest which avoids placing undue stress on the students to

participate. Finally, I conducted the research interview, follow up interview, and for the data analysis, I worked with two research assistants (RA1 and RA2).

Research Assistant 1 (RA1) is a white male. RA1 has a master's in mathematics and was a former math teacher who became a teacher on special assignments and was a data specialist for the building. RA1 was also the master scheduler for the 2022-2023 school year. Being our building data specialist, he has skills focused on reviewing fine details and gathering and condensing large chunks of information into smaller, more manageable pieces of data. Research Assistant 2 (RA2) is a biracial female who identifies as white and black and is Jewish. RA2 has a doctorate in counselor education, is a former career counselor, was a former instructor at the University of Minnesota, started their own private college counseling business, and is now the college and career readiness coordinator. RA2's university-level experience, engagement with career and technical options and offerings, and involvement with a variety of college representatives from around the nation add to the depth and understanding of how to prepare and provide options for high school students for college and career paths. These two research assistants helped with the data analysis and interpretation when reviewing the transcripts and journal entries from the participants in the group. Two research assistants were selected because of triangulation to help establish confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) when identifying the domains and themes.

Group Sessions

The structure of the high school schedule allowed the researcher to conduct six group meeting sessions during a period that did not disrupt the participants' educational learning. The group was led by the main researcher. The participants were sent a pass on the morning of each group session as a reminder. Group sessions were held in an unoccupied classroom scheduled by

the main researcher. The group sessions were implemented for 68 minutes once a week for six weeks. Components of group design as described by Yalom (2005) were taken into the formulation of the group sessions in this study such as a being a brief closed-group with a predetermined length of time (six weeks) and once a week meetings. ASCA (2019) does not recommend a specific length of time aside from suggesting group work to be short-term. Ultimately, the six-week meeting duration was selected because it aligned with the midwest high school's calendar.

All sessions were a mix of discussions, interactions, and engagement activities (Paone et al., 2008) along with open group discussions (Malott et al., 2019). The topics selected were self-created using Lor's (2008) Blueprint for College Success: The Hmong Student Model as the goal for each session and literature on college and career readiness (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004; Hollie, 2016; Lor, 2008; Oleka & Mitchell, 2022; Xiong & Lam, 2013; Yalom, 2005). Each group lesson can be found in Appendix H. An overview of the sessions is listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Group Session Overview

Session #	Session Overview	Conley (2008)	ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors	Hmong Student Model Lor (2008)	Barriers Xiong & Lam (2013)
1. Group Intro and Family	• Introductions and Purpose (Yalom, 2005) • Identity Shield (Malott & Paone, 2016) for self and family	• Contextual skills and knowledge.	M 1, 2, 4, & 5 B-LS 4 & 9 B-SMS 1, 2, & 3 B-SS 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, & 10	• Family Support • Awareness of change in Hmong community	• Cultural
2. Support Network	• Resources (Oleka & Mitchell, 2022) (School Counselor as a resource) • Prompts (Xiong & Lam, 2013) • Write Pair Share on Lor (2008).	• Content knowledge • Academic behaviors • Contextual skills and knowledge.	M 3, 4, 5, & 6 B-LS 1, 2, 4, 5, 9 B-SMS 1, 5, 6, 10 B-SS 3, 5, 6, 8	• Educator, Peer, Co-Curricular Support	• Academic • Cultural • Financial
3. Financial Aid Presentation	• Financial Aid Presentation	• Contextual skills and knowledge.	M 4, 5, & 6 B-LS 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 B-SMS 1, 3, 4, 5, 6,	• Financial Aid Understanding	• Cultural • Financial

	(Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004; Hollie, 2016; Ngo et al., 2018) • Group discussion		& 10 B-SS 1, 2, 3 ,8, & 10		
4. Understanding Beliefs on College and Career	• Group discussion on beliefs (Lor, 2008) • Complete worksheet with peer input	• Cognitive strategies • Academic behaviors • Contextual skills and knowledge.	M 1, 4, 5, & 6 B-LS 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, & 9 B-SMS 1, 2, 3, 6, & 7 B-SS 2, 5, & 6	• Vision and Drive	• Academic • Cultural • Financial
5. Vision and Drive	• Goal planning worksheet: College, career, and community (Lee & Green, 2009: Lor, 2008)	• Academic behaviors • Contextual skills and knowledge.	M 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10 B-LS 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 & 8 B-SMS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 8. B-SS 2, 6, 8, & 10	• Promotion and Advancement	• Academic • Cultural • Financial
6. College Student Panel	• Validating, Affirm, Build, and Bridge (Hollie, 2016) • Gibbons & Shoffner (2004)	• Content knowledge, • Academic behaviors, • Contextual skills and knowledge.	M 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6 B-LS 3, 4, 7, 9, & 10 B-SMS 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, & 9 B-SS 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, & 9	• Awareness of change in Hmong community • Financial Aid Understanding • Promotion and Advancement	• Academic • Cultural • Financial

Week One

Week One's goal was to introduce the group members to one another, establish norms, and understand the purpose of the group. Yalom (2005) stated that the initial task for a group was the engagement and affiliation of its participants. Also, Yalom (2005) stated a main task is to help members understand the purpose of the group and find a niche for themselves that will provide comfort for group membership. Week 1 was aligned with Lor's (2008)'s cluster 1, which is how family is pivotal to the success of Hmong students. The objective was for the group members to create an identity shield (Malott & Paone, 2016) for themselves and their families and then discuss it as a group. This included parents, siblings, and other close family members, as they each contribute to their success in different ways. The identity shield helped explore values taught at home, how each participant processed them, and how they applied them to themselves.

Week Two

Week Two's goal was for group members to understand barriers that typically impact Hmong students and how to navigate through them (Lor, 2008; Xiong & Lam, 2013). The objective was for the group members to read excerpts from Xiong & Lam's (2013) article and discuss as a group their reaction to the barriers and how they would navigate through them, along with identifying resources. After understanding the barriers, the group members read Lor's (2008) Hmong Student Model Clusters, which was a blueprint for college success, and did a write-pair-Share. Write-Pair-Share allowed the participants to engage with a partner to share their response and write down their partner's response. The sharing aspect allowed them both to summarize their meeting and write or share a cohesive message that combined their messages into one. Lastly, group members identified trusted adults and educators in their school. The purpose of identifying a trusted adult in the building was for them to explore what they value in others, who they maintain relationships with, and how the adult is a resource to them.

Week Three

Week Three's goal was for group members to understand how to navigate ways to afford college through understanding financial aid. The group leader invited a financial aid expert to meet with the group members. Group members were given a financial aid guide adapted from The College Board's Big Future with questions about financial aid. The financial aid expert was Hmong. Ngo et al. (2018) demonstrated that professional educators of color who share a natural connection with students can help build kinship and community into the learning environment in group work, which increases rapport and relationships among group members. A Hmong financial aid expert matched Hollie (2016) in how professionals can validate, affirm, build, and bridge rapport with students to build awareness of their identity and their resources. Also, Gibbons & Shoffner (2004) suggested talking to adolescents about removing barriers and how

role models can help support them. The group members were asked to prepare their two cents, which are two questions they asked the expert. Participants' goal was to listen, engage, and interact with the experts on how they can prepare themselves for college financially.

Week Four

Week Four's goal was to help group members understand their beliefs on college and career to help them understand their vision and drive towards college and career development, which is cluster 4 from Lor (2008). The objective was for group members to discuss the impact of family and culture on their understanding of college and careers. Group members responded to a worksheet that helped them focus on three levels: their own beliefs, their family beliefs, and their peer or social group beliefs on college and career. For activity two, group members moved to stations around the room, and then partners shared by answering questions posted at each station.

Week Five

Week Five's goal was to help group members understand Lor (2008)'s cluster 4, which is vision and drive, and cluster 5, which is promotion and advancement. Lee & Green (2009) reported that Hmong students who had clear goals after high school were more successful academically in school. Group members were goal-planning and completed a worksheet that allowed them to target three goals: a college goal, a career goal, and a community goal. For each, group members wrote action steps to acquire it. After, group members shared their goals with two other group members, and each member added an action step to help support the acquisition of the goal.

Week Six

Week Six's goal was to invite a college panel to come in and discuss with the group members. The college panel consisted of current Hmong college students in the area. Once again, this panel matched Hollie's (2016) validating, affirming, building, and bridging for students to build awareness of their identity and their resources, as well as Gibbons & Shoffner's (2004) of removing barriers and using role models for support. The group participants gave their two cents, which were two questions they asked the panel. A guide of questions was given to the group members as well.

Group sessions were created to enhance the college and post-secondary planning process and help expose participants to group work, resources and support networks, financial aid and how to afford college, understanding their own beliefs about college and post-secondary planning, their vision and drive for planning, and connecting with others like them who are in college. All the session were created to help the participants better understand their college and career goals. Although declaring a specific career path with clear goals would be an ideal end goal, it was not a goal of this study.

Data Collection

The main source of data collected was through individual interviews with group participants and the weekly journal entries from each group session. The weekly journal entries occurred after each group session. Participants were given ten minutes to respond to the journal prompt (Appendix A) as their journal entry immediately followed each group session. The individual interviews were conducted at the end of the six sessions, with each participant interviewed by the researcher in the researcher's office. Moustakas (1994) described the interview as a process that is both informal and interactive incorporating comments and questions that are open-ended. The interviews were conducted and completed within a week of

the last group session meeting. The individual interviews were recorded using voice memos from the researcher's personal computer. The interview process was semi-structured, and the questions were open-ended regarding the group experience. Interview questions (Appendix B) were modified from Malott et al.'s (2019)'s study with careful consideration of the procedure as suggested by Creswell & Poth (2018). The interviews were 30 to 60 minutes long. Following the process of member checking, an additional interview followed the initial interview to clarify, better understand, and expand the essence of each group member's experience.

Data Analysis

For the journal entries, they were typed from the handwritten journal entries onto a Word document, and any identifying information was removed. For the recorded interviews, the file was submitted to the transcription program Rev.com (Rev.com, 2022). Rev.com is a speech-to-text service that individuals and companies can contact to transcribe audio to text. The main researcher used the option of human transcription, which offered 99% accuracy with a five-hour turnaround by a professional transcriptionist (Rev.com, 2022). Rev.com employees are trained to practice security and privacy, and all employees go through a background check and have signed confidentiality agreements (Rev.com, 2022). Rev.com does not share or sell information to any third-party marketers (Rev.com, 2022). Rev.com is also HIPPA-compliant (Rev.com, 2022). Afterward, the researchers reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. Once transcripts were done from the first and follow-up interviews and all identifying information was de-identified or removed, they were given on paper to RA1 and RA2 to read and review in addition to the journal entries.

Below is a summary of the steps the researchers used for the data analysis. The original steps by Moustakas (1994) are a modification of Stevick's (1971), Colaiszzi's (1973), and Keen's (1975) approaches:

A. Horizontalizing

a. Reviewed each statement, respecting each as a significant experience

b. Identified all relevant statements that pertain to the research question.

c. These are the invariant horizons, which are the meaning units of the experience.

B. Clustered the invariant horizons into themes.

C. Synthesized the themes into a description of the textures of the experience by identifying direct quotes

D. Wrote a description, which is the textural structural description for each domain. This becomes the essence of the experience.

After the transcripts were acquired from Rev.com, the researcher and the research assistants started with horizontalizing. They reviewed the transcripts independently from the journal entries, the initial interview, and the follow-up interview and looked for horizons as stated by Moustakas (1994). This process is to identify any relevant expressions stated by the participants during the interview as they relate to the research question of the study (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalizing is to view each statement from the interview and treat it as equal to the research question (Moustakas, 1994, p. 132). After that was completed, the researcher and research assistants (RA1 and RA2) met together for the first time and clustered the horizons into domains and themes. If there were differences, the researcher and research assistants discussed their reasoning for the placement until all agreed on a single placement. After, the researcher combined all invariant horizons from the main researcher, RA1 and RA2 into one document to

ensure there was agreement with one another. Each researcher read the statements to ensure they agreed with the horizon and theme. Then, the researcher and research assistants synthesized together the themes into textural descriptions of the experience, along with including verbatim examples using the transcripts. After the domains, themes, and sub-themes were discovered and there was a consensual agreement, the abstracts were written using the participants' words that best summarized the essence of the experience. The descriptions encapsulate the essence of how Hmong adolescent's experience group work with college and career lesson.

In summary, when the interviews were done, the researchers horizontalized the data. The researcher and the research assistants then noted the meaning of each statement and then combined them into meaning units, which were then clustered into domains and themes (Moustakas, 1994). Domains were key points stated by the participants, and themes were reoccurring topics mentioned by the participants. The domains and themes were then used to develop textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The textural descriptions were then developed into structural descriptions and created the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

The main researcher acquired approval to conduct the study from the administration at the high school that participated in the study as well as Minnesota State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The parents and guardians of the participants were given a video in Hmong and English that will explain the purpose and intention of this research and informed consent documents that required a signature to participate in the group and the study. Anonymity is important and explained by the researcher to ensure that all identifying information of the participants remains private (Smith et al., 2022). The data collected was kept in a locked office at the school. The research team maintained all data confidentially (Smith et al., 2022). Creswell &

Poth (2018) mentioned the protection of participants from harm and the disclosure of comprehensive findings (p. 183). Raw and unedited data and transcripts were only seen by the main researcher (Smith et al., 2022). Participants were all given a number (1-6) to mask their identities for the interviews. Participant codes were connected to their journal entries. The data was coded before the research assistants' review. Parents and participants were given the option to discontinue their involvement with the study at any time. Due to the nature of the topics discussed in the group sessions, if the participants require additional support and care (Smith et al., 2022), they would be referred to the school counselors, social workers, and/or counselors for additional support.

Ensuring Trustworthiness & Credibility

To establish trustworthiness, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggested the researcher establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The method of triangulation, which uses different data collection methods, was used for this study and will help establish credibility and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study used two forms of data collection: transcripts and journal entries. Both are main sources of data that help a study establish credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcripts provided a summary of the participants' experiences of the group after six weeks of group, while the journal entries are a reflection of their experiences immediately after group. Even more, member checking after interview 1 supports validity. Member checking is a validation of a group member's experience. During interview 2, group members were given the transcripts, journal entries, and worksheets to review. Each group member confirmed and validated that the transcripts, journals, and worksheets are theirs and an accurate reflection of their experience with the group.

Transferability is another way to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability refers to the applicability of the data acquired from this study to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the results of the lived experiences of the participants from the group experience can be applied to understanding the post-secondary development and career development of Hmong adolescents, the Hmong community, Southeast Asian Americans, school counselors working with Hmong students, and the field of group work. The results section of this study focused on providing thick descriptions, which detail explicit information from the study that informs patterns of social and cultural relationships (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability and confirmability are other ways to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For dependability, Golafshani (2003) shared that Lincoln & Guba's (1985) referral to dependability is similar to reliability. Through the two data sets and combining domains and themes discovered by each researcher, this process established reliability by gathering a shared understanding among the researchers. To establish confirmability, the researcher practiced reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For transcendental phenomenology, the researcher and RA1 and RA2, each wrote in their own journal to record and reflecft their biases and beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985. This helped in understanding their roles given the researcher has multiple roles as mentioned previously. During the researcher's meetings with the research assistants, the researcher and the research assistants discussed any items written in the journal to clarify any statements and check for understanding. The researcher also read, reviewed, and wrote notes before and after interviewing each participant. The reflective journal entries recorded decisions that impact methods, interview questions, and the reasons to support them, in addition to how the study was structured and what the next steps will be. Also, the reflective journal reflects the

researcher's own values and interests (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflective journal supported the researchers in reflecting on the research process, revealing any biases, and bringing awareness of changes.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative approach that will be used for this group study. Shared were the details of the two main sets of data that will be collected, which are transcripts from the interview and participant journal entries. Then information on the consent forms for parents and guardians and assent forms for the participants, given they are under the age of 18. Also, information about the Midwest high school, the researchers, and the research assistants was discussed as to how they impact the study. Importantly, each group session was shared and connected to Conley's (2008) four factors and ASCA's Student Standards: Mindsets and Behaviors (2021). Even more, data collection was described, starting with Rev.com for the transcription. Finally, considerations of trustworthiness and credibility based on Lincoln & Guba (1985) which included triangulation and reflexivity, were described.

CHAPTER 4

In this chapter, the domains and themes discovered from the transcripts and journals from the group work will be presented. The research question that guided this study was: How do Hmong adolescents (participants) make sense of (or meaning around) their lived experiences at this Midwest high school receiving college and career support through group work? At the start of the data analysis, the main researcher, and the research assistants horizontalized the data. The researchers reviewed each significant statement's meaning and then combined them into meaning units. These meaning units were clustered into domains and themes (Moustakas, 1994). Domains are key points shared by the participants, and themes are reoccurring topics. The domains and themes are then used to develop textural descriptions, which are then used to develop structural descriptions. Moustakas (1994) shared that this process creates the essence of the phenomenon in a qualitative study. After all the domains and themes were discovered and there is a consensual agreement, the abstracts were written.

Participant Profiles

The participants in this study were all enrolled in a midwest high school. They were all Hmong students and were in grades 10th–12th during the 2022-2023 academic school year. There were six participants total, with three who identified as male and three who identified as female. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Pseudonym	Pao	Mai	Meng	Sheng	Tub	Zer
Grade level	12th grade	11th grade	11th grade	12th grade	11th grade	10th grade
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Career Aspiration	Engineering	Singer/Song writer	Computer	Cosmetology	Professional Tennis athlete	Lawyer
Parent Education Level	Mom has an Associate's Degree	Unknown	Unknown	Mom has a college degree. Level unknown.	Unknown	Unknown

Participants

Pao, was a 12th grade male. His original plan before the group was to go to college and pursue a college degree in engineering. At the time of joining the group, he wanted to learn more about his career path options, as he has already been accepted to a college in the midwest. He saw himself as caring and helpful, exhibiting both masculine and feminine characteristics, and he enjoys discussions with others. He believes peers at school may see him as quiet, informative, and serious. His family and close friends describes him as quiet, more feminine than masculine when it comes to personality, and kind-hearted. He shared that his mom has an associate's degree.

Mai, was a 10th grade female. She identified as using feminine pronouns, She/Her/Hers, but also as a Tomboy. She plans to go to college after high school and chose to join group to learn more about college and how to afford it. She enjoys music and sports. She believes others see her as reserved and calm. Her family members may describe her as boring, simple, quiet, and independent. She believes those in the school see her as reserved. Both of her parents do not have a college degree. She wants to be a musician or singer, but her parents want her to pursue a career in computer science. Mai and Tub are siblings.

Meng, was an 11th grade male. Before joining the group, he knew he wanted to go to college but did not have a major in mind. He enjoys gaming and has created games on Roblox. He said his family spoke to him about college, but it was not a required goal for each family member. He described himself as someone who likes humor and is a friend to others. He presents himself as someone who is knowledgeable and funny, yet others may also think he is modest.

His family members describe him as smart and loud, but he can also be very quiet. He does not know the educational history of his parents.

Sheng, was a 12th grade female. Sheng wanted to join the group to learn about post-secondary options. Before joining the group, she wanted to go to a beauty school to work in cosmetology after high school. She is not close to her father, but to her mother. Sheng's mother has a college degree, but Sheng does not know what level. She presents herself as someone who takes things seriously. Her closest friends and family see her as someone who could be loud sometimes but is also very quiet. Others have told her they think she is smart and quiet.

Tub, is a 10th grade male. He enjoys sports, particularly tennis, and aspires to play tennis in college; however, he fears that his parents will not support him with this. He knows he wants to go to college and wanted to join the group to learn about his options. His parents do not have a college degree. He describes himself as an athlete, and he enjoys listening to music. He can be very talkative around those he knows and is close with, but others may describe him as quiet, caring, hard-working, and smart. Tub and Mai are siblings.

Zer, is a 10th grade female. She enjoys school and wants to become a lawyer, but she fears that her traditional parent's beliefs about Hmong daughters will hinder her college goals. Both her parents are hard-working business entrepreneurs who own a restaurant. Zer helps her parents daily in the evenings and on the weekends. Zer is very hardworking and feels she spends a lot of time helping her parents with their business. Zer believes she is very social and enjoys talking with others. Others see her as smart, quiet, competitive, and hardworking.

Pao and Zer were the most engaged and led the group discussions for majority of the sessions. Pao shared that, being the oldest male, he felt he had the cultural obligation to encourage the other group members to increase engagement and communication during group.

Zer demonstrated the most excitement and energy in the group each session. Zer was usually the first to talk and respond to group prompts. Zer shared that outside of the group, she encouraged the other group members to talk more.

Results

There was a total of 5 domains, 16 themes, and 3 subthemes that emerged from the participant responses as the essence of the experience for the participants. The domains are Family, Barriers, Group, Post-secondary Plans, and the School Environment. Selected quotes from the participants' transcripts are cited to illustrate both the domain and the theme. Applying the suggestions by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), themes that apply to all participants are listed as general, themes that apply to half or more participants are listed as typical, and themes that apply to less than half the participants are listed as a variant. Hill et al. (1997) also suggested not applying themes that apply to only one or two participants; however, to help identify a specific phenomenon to add to the greater research community and research on Hmong adolescents in small groups, some of those themes will be shared. An overview of the domains and themes is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2

Domains and Themes Overview

Domain 1: Family	Domain 2: Barriers	Domain 3: Group Experience	Domain 4: Post-Secondary Plans	Domain 5: School Environment
• Theme 1.1 Family members are a major source for post-secondary planning o Subtheme 1.1.a- participant felt they must make post-	• Theme 2.1: The English Language is a barrier to education	• Theme 3.1 Through group, participants learned what they had in common. o Subtheme 3.1.a – A group with members and presenters who are alike helped	• Theme 4.1 Career development	• Theme 5.1 Participants know the resources in their school

secondary decisions that impacted their family		normalize their experiences.		
• Theme 1.2 Family values impacted beliefs on future planning	• Theme 2.2 The cost of college is a barrier	• Theme 3.2 Group logistics and planning for future small group work	• Theme 4.2 Participant confidence about post-secondary planning varied, but was generally low	• Theme 5.2 Participants struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers in schools
• Theme 1.3 Parents have different expectations for boys and girls (Dual spectrum)	• Theme 2.3 Understanding the American culture was difficult for both participants and their parents.	• Theme 3.3 The group sessions were helpful.		• Theme 5.3 Participants were able to identify educators who can support them in school.
• Theme 1.4 Hmong culture impacts post-secondary planning o Subtheme 1.4.a Participant identity was supported through group work.	• Theme 2.4 Participants acknowledged they lack educational skills.			

Domain 1: Family

Participants shared how members of their families impact their decision-making when planning their future. Four themes with two sub-themes were identified. The first theme [1.1] is that family members are a major source for post-secondary planning, with a subtheme of Participants made post-secondary decisions that impacted their family, the second theme [1.2] Family values impacted the participant's beliefs on future planning, the third theme [1.3] Parents have different expectations for boys and girls, and the last theme [1.4] How the Hmong culture impacted post-secondary planning. In this domain, participants identified certain individuals in

their family who influence their college and career planning; participants shared how their family values influence college and career planning; participants shared gender-based expectations from their parents; and participants shared how family members use the Hmong culture to impact college and post-secondary planning. Each theme will be described below in more detail with participant quotes. Table 3 is an overview of Domain 1: Family.

Table 3
Domain 1: Family

- Theme 1.1 Family members are a major source for post-secondary planning.
  - Subtheme 1.1.a Participant felt they must make post-secondary decisions that impacted their family.
- Theme 1.2 Family values impacted beliefs on future planning.
- Theme 1.3 Parents have different expectations for boys and girls (Dual spectrum)
- Theme 1.4 Hmong culture impacts post-secondary planning.
  - Subtheme 1.4.a Participant identity was supported through group work.

Theme 1.1 – Family members are a major source for post-secondary planning.

In general, participants stated that their family members were a source of information and support for post-secondary planning. While some participants responded to this information differently, family members were the main source of the information. When Pao arrived, he knocked on the researcher's door gently after lunch. He asked, "I received your pass, am I here for the interview?" After the researcher confirmed with a gesture. Pao walked into the office, sat in the chair, put his backpack in front of his legs, and took off his mask. He looked behind him eagerly as students were passing by the window office since it was passing time while the researcher was preparing the computers for the interview. Relaxed in his chair, the researcher started the interview. The researcher asked, "How did you know your school counselor was a resource?" Pao sat in the chair with his hands fidgeting on his lap and calmly responded that he: "asked my siblings since there was no other way I could reach out for help or who I can reach out for help to, since they've recently been through high school." Pao's older siblings passed down their prior knowledge to him. His siblings have gone through it, so maybe they know and

have an understanding. Pao depends on his siblings since they are family. They live in the same household, and it was only natural for him to believe his older siblings since, culturally, that is what Hmong children were taught: for the younger sibling to obey and respect the older siblings and any elder. Pao then eagerly shared that another family member, his aunt, was a resource too by saying, “like my family found out about midwest college, it was actually from my aunt, because she's a graduate from there.” Pao was confident that beyond his siblings, he also has an adult family member he could trust to provide him with information to help him plan his post-secondary plans because his aunt went to the midwest college. Pao did not answer the question asked, but it was apparent that he did not utilize his school counselor but chose to ask family members instead.

With the same question prompt from the researcher, Meng, who was sitting low in his chair with his hands on his lap and direct eye contact with the researcher, said that he did not know school counselors were a resource and that he only knew because of his brothers told him to seek out his school counselor. Meng was different from Pao in that Meng’s brothers may have learned about their college and post-secondary options and opportunities from their school counselor. Maybe a school counselor worked with Meng’s brothers in the past, and now they want to ensure Meng gets help too.

Different from Meng and Pao, Sheng nodded her head side to side, suggesting she was saying ‘no.’ During the interview, Sheng came into the room with her light-colored purse, backpack, and a drink in her left hand. She was late and apologized, but sat down immediately, ready to be interviewed. Sheng did not identify family members in her household but shared, “I talked to my cousins,” with the same prompt. Sheng, with an apprehensive crooked smile, says, “I feel like they have more experience and they say stuff that would actually make me more

prepared for college than some of the counselors could." In the researcher's office, before sharing more, she giggled, appearing to have acknowledged that the researcher was a school counselor too. It was unclear if there was a lack of trust towards her assigned school counselor; however, later, it was revealed that she did not find there was a need until this:

> I know some of my counselors told me to if I ever need help with college planning just go to them, but I chose not to. Like I said, because my cousins have more experience and I have one cousin that already went to college and I might talk to him about college planning because his college is more better.

Sheng may have tried to seek some support with college and post-secondary planning from her school counselor; however, something held her back. Nevertheless, she shared that her cousin was the main source of support for college and post-secondary planning, and it was apparent she depended on them as she confidently ended her response. On another similar note, when Mai came for the interview, she had a mask on, and her voice was so soft-spoken that the researcher struggled to hear her. The researcher asked her to sit closer to the computer to ensure the recording program would be able to capture and record her voice. Mai shared that her family is their backbone and their main resource for college and post-secondary planning: "what has been most helpful so far for me is learning things from my friends and family." When Zer first came in for the interview, the researcher found her sitting in the waiting room along with other students who were also waiting for their counselor during passing time. Although there was many noises from other conversations and ringing office phones, her excited voice and lively eyes pierced through the rowdy clutter of the mass of students. Zer shared that she will need to inquire and seek out resources from the school as all she depends on are her family and friends.

Given her social personality and that this was her first year at the high school, she has an early start to become more familiar with the resources available to her at her school.

Subtheme 1.1.a – Participants felt they must make post-secondary decisions that impacted their families.

It was typical that participants felt a sense of responsibility toward their families. This responsibility included what decisions they make about their own individual lives based on the examples that other family members have set. Tub shared during the interview that his: "parents always encourage me to go to college. And all my older siblings, I watched them all go to college and stuff. I wanted to go to college, but at the same time I didn't." He paused after sharing this and looked around the room while his knees were moving up and down. He then stared at the floor before waiting for the researcher to respond. Tub's parents have set an expectation that he and his siblings need to go to college. He felt responsible or had some obligation to go to college since his older siblings all went too. However, he did not sound confident about going to college, but he was more dreadful since he was slouched in his chair. Similarly, Zer shared her obligations to her family as well by saying, "I know I can't go that far [for college] because of my family. They don't want me to go so far away." Zer rolled her eyes when she said that, alluding to the fact that she was annoyed and that this may have been bothering her for a while. Even more, Zer shared an example of how if she married a Hmong male, her cultural responsibility to his family would impact her post-secondary plans:

> My boyfriend and his family, seeing how he wants to become a doctor, motivates me to do as good as him. And then his parents were obviously like, oh, are you going to do this? And I was like, yeah, I am. I want to be a good daughter. And I'm like, I want to provide for the family because it's my family now, so I need to provide, it's a need for me.

Zer smiled and shrugged her shoulders while talking about her boyfriend and how their future would be. Her large eyes stared far ahead of her as if she was peeking into her future, although she was only sitting on the edge of the chair.

On another note, Mai has a post-secondary responsibility to her family, but it is for financial reasons. Mai, in a soft, gentle, and slow tone, said, “Well, it just made me thought maybe I should work harder [in college] to get a better job that pays high that I can help them [my family] a little." Mai said she has a lot of siblings, and for her to depend solely on her parents was not possible. Mai and Tub are both 10th graders; therefore, it would be extremely difficult for her parents to pay for both to attend college. She hoped to go to college, get a good degree, and then find a job to help her family financially. As mentioned earlier, Mai shared in the group that one of her main reasons for joining the group was to learn about ways to pay for college.

During the interview, Sheng dedicatedly shared, “My mom, she's very strict about it [future planning]. She yelled at me saying, what am I going to do in the future?” Furthermore, Sheng is the only daughter in the family with many brothers. She then said her older brother often tells her not to be like him since he sees himself as a bad influence on her. He supports her and wants her to graduate from high school and go to college. Sheng never shared much about her brother beyond this, but he seems to really care for her and wanted the best for her. She is his only sister, and since he is older, he naturally took on the role of taking care of his younger sibling. After sharing this, Sheng sat and there was a pause. Sheng looked around the room as if she had consciously become aware again of her responsibilities to her brother and mother. Before the researcher could read the next question, she said she did not want to turn out like her brother and did not want to disappoint her mother.

Theme 1.2 – Family values impacted beliefs on post-secondary planning.

It was typical that participants identified family values as an influential force in their current lives and future planning. This influence could align with participants' beliefs and plans, or it could conflict with their plans; the common theme tended to be that identifying, understanding the impact of, and responding to family expectations and values was a key part of the participants' lives. In the interview, Sheng was staring at the floor as if she were nervous or hesitant to share when the researcher asked her the question, “What are your college or post-secondary plans after high school?” She looked up, appearing to ponder, and then she finally spoke:

> Well, when I have my high school diploma, why do I need a college diploma? I have a huge argument with my mom about it. And she [mom] was like, "You'll be dumb.” She said that if I don't go to college my level of education will go down, which I do agree with because from my experience, I feel like every time summer comes and the school starts, I feel like I don't remember anything at all, even my writing has got worse. So, I agree with her, but at the same time, I didn't want to go to college at all…..I feel like families think that once you go to college and after graduating, you have a higher paid job, which I agree with them, because that is true. Because they're like, "Oh, well, you graduated, I could give you a higher position, or a higher paid job", and even with the high school diploma, it's not as much as the college one, so they just put you at specific place higher than the ones without high school diplomas.

After sharing this, she paused for a bit while her hands were holding onto her chair, maybe waiting for the researcher to reply, then she looked up. Sheng may have realized that her mom and her beliefs about college were very different. Although she laughed and giggled when

she said ‘dumb,’ it was not clear if she believed that word describes her since she shared the example that she does not remember things or if using that word was her mom’s way of instilling fear into her to prevent her from going another post-secondary path different from college. She appeared to be wondering if a high school degree would be enough for her to get a good-paying job versus going to college. Possibly because her mom has a college degree and expected the same from her only daughter. If so, since Sheng was struggling in school, she may be worried about living up to her mom’s expectations and beliefs about college.

In common with Sheng and family values impacting beliefs on post-secondary planning, Mai, Tub, and Zer all shared their family beliefs on college and post-secondary plans. Tub said that “All of my siblings go to college and my parents always tell me to go to college when I get older. Then I just figured I would go to college when I get older, when I finish high school.” After he shared this, his tone of voice confidently mentioned how he has an older sister who was pursuing her doctoral degree. It was apparent that his parents believed that he and his siblings should pursue college and that they may value a high professional degree. Compatible to this, Zer shared her family’s values on college, especially with how COVID impacted them: “My parents and my siblings and my friends, they all always motivate me to go to college. Especially my siblings though, because they're always like, oh, since COVID started, I couldn't go to college, so you should take this opportunity and go.” Zer’s siblings, although unable to meet their family’s expectations for college, were redirecting their younger sibling to not follow their path. Like Sheng shared earlier, her brothers did not want her to end up like them [working and not going to college] as well. Mai also vocalized with some level of uncertainty that, “My plans after high school before this group was always college because my parents, especially my mom, wanted us to go to college, because she didn't want us to find a job with a lot of labor working.”

Mai's family may believe that if she went to college, that would minimize or void careers for her that involve labor-intensive work. Most immigrant parents have blue-collar jobs that do not utilize and showcase their skills best.

Theme 1.3 – Parents have different expectations for boys and girls.

It was a variant that when participants identified expectations of their behavior and choices, their gender and the gender of their family members had a significant influence on these expectations. During the interview, the researcher asked Zer, "When you hear of those things [stricter on daughters than sons], how does that make you feel? What are some immediate reactions that you feel about this?" Throughout the entire interview, Zer's upright posture, her enlarged eyes and stern voice, and how she used her arms to articulate herself demonstrated how much this topic meant to her. Zer's response was:

> Whenever I hear people, well, parents [Hmong] in general just saying, not them saying, but I see their action and I see how they don't really care about whatever the boys do, but they care whatever the daughters do, it makes me feel like pissed because why can't we go out and why do we always have to do everything around the house, but the guys is doing nothing. It's only whenever there's like, you need to mow lawn or there's something.

Zer was really bothered by this topic after sharing this gender-based expectation from her parents. With a frustrated tone, it appeared that she was referring not only to herself but also to other Hmong female adolescents. Zer also shared with the group during a session that she was not allowed to go to college far away or live in the dorms; however, her brothers were. When expressing her impassioned feelings about being a Hmong daughter, she shared another example of a time with her brother:

> Whenever I have homework and then all my siblings are asleep, he [brother] just comes to me [Zer]. He's like, "Oh, change the diaper, change the kids' diaper." I was like, "I'm doing my homework. I can't do it." And he's like, "I don't know how to", I was like, "Well, then that's how you learn."

Comparable to Zer, Sheng, another female group member and the only daughter in her family shared similar expectations from her parents by saying:

> My brothers don't have licenses, my mom allows them to drive, when it comes to me she was like, "You're not allowed to drive, you're not allowed to go nowhere. Why are you driving by yourself?", I'm like, "They drive by themselves", and she's like, "Because they know how to drive, but they don't have a license", and she was like, "It doesn't matter", and I'm like, "It does matter". Just a little, because I'm the only girl in the family, and I'm very precious to my mom, so she doesn't want anything to happen to me.

During group, Sheng shared how her mother was stricter about her being the only daughter. Zer also wrote in her journal her reaction to Sheng by saying: "I feel kind of sad because I see how Sheng's mom responds to them going out so much and like their mom is less strict on them compared to my mom." With this theme, it was a variant that two participants shared gender-based expectations from their parents. This group had 3 female Hmong members: Mai, Sheng, and Zer. Mai did not share any gender-based experiences from her family like Sheng and Zer; however, Mai did share their identity as more of a tomboy.

Pao is a male and identifies as male; however, he knows he has both male and female characteristics within his personality. He shared examples in his journal and in group that at school he presents himself more as a male because he has mostly friends who are boys; however, at home, he has mostly sisters and is often acting like a girl. The males in the group, Pao, Meng,

and Tub, did not share any gender-based expectations from their parents throughout the interview, which may support the fact that their parents expected them to go to college and did not limit them. This may also mean they were trying to avoid this conversation because they knew it was an issue in the Hmong community or that they had the privilege of not having any limitations based on their gender.

With this theme, there were some gender-based expectations of what boys should do at home versus girls. Zer was asked to do tasks at home that her brothers could do but was told by her parents that some tasks are gender-based. Zer was bothered by this the most, as her parents wanted her to go to college but did not allow her to live off campus or attend a college far away. Sheng's mother wanted her to go to college too, but she seems hesitant as she is struggling in school to graduate. The boys in the group did share that their parents expected them to go to college, but they were never limited by distance.

Theme 1.4 – Hmong culture impacts post-secondary planning.

In general, all participants seemed to understand the presence of Hmong culture and how it played a role in their personal lives with college and post-secondary planning. A majority commented on the traditional aspect of the culture and how few people outside of the Hmong community know or understand the Hmong culture. In the interview with Pao, the researcher asked, "What were your post-secondary plans before this group?" For better context, he was a senior, and the group was meeting during term 3. The school has four terms for the entire school year. By this time, most seniors in his cohort who plan to go to college should know which colleges have already accepted, deferred, or denied them. Before answering the question, he paused, his knees started to shake, and his face looked worried. When he was ready, he said:

> Well, my parents didn't know about how bad I did during junior year, so I was hoping that I got accepted. But when I got the acceptance letter, well, the denied letter and how they saw my grades during my junior year, it didn't really go so well.

He stuttered a bit and stumbled to say something next. The researcher then prompted, “So your parents don’t really know how you did in school? How come they don’t know?” Pao pauses for a bit while staring at the floor and then says, “I was afraid of being scowled by them, being Hmong and the typical Asian pyramid and stuff,” with a frustrated tone. It was apparent he was trying to avoid being yelled at and lectured by his parents about school and his grades, as he must have experienced it before and did not like it. The researcher then asked, “So there’s a bit of fear?” Pao gently nodded his head in agreement with the researcher; however, it appeared there may be more. Pao did not want to disappoint his family and felt embarrassed due to the denial letter from the midwest college. Even more, his academic grades from 11th grade did not meet the college’s admissions requirements. He also generalized the Hmong with other Asian ethnic groups, model minority Asians, on how their expectations are with their children in pursuing college.

Zer shared previously how she was irritated and frustrated about how the Hmong culture views gender-based expectations and how this impacts her college and post-secondary plans. In the statement below, her eyes were rolled up to her side, and her mouth was slightly downturned, giving a forced smile. She then says:

> It was really hard to see how the other girl in the group was saying how her parents aren't that strict on her. That made me sad and that made me reflect on myself. I'm like, "Wow, I can't do that because my family's different." I felt jealous and also sad, but then I also understood. And even if I was given the option, I wouldn't go out like that. Because that's

> just not me. I don't like to go out like that. And maybe it was the way I was raised and how I never got to go out until middle school. And then culture things I think like we were talking about earlier in home, women do have it harder, but I can't really say that because I don't know what more guys go through too. I don't want to be sexist or anything.

Zer expanded this some more and shared that a quality of a good daughter was to be obedient and meet the expectations of her parents, versus a post-secondary plan that they want individually. Zer said: "...my family just doesn't want me to go so far away [for college] because they think if I go so far away, I'm not going to be a good daughter anymore." Even more, she identified the differences between traditional and modern Hmong parents, implying differences in what they expect from their children, "Hmong parents, since people came here at different times, we don't really know. Some parents are more traditional, and some parents are more modern, but from what I see, a lot of parents are still really traditional." Sheng matched this by saying how "Hmong daughters are to be more obedient," and that "Hmong girls don't want to be rude at their parents," therefore they try their best to do what their parents expect from them.

Tub shared how he felt the Hmong culture impacted his post-secondary plans. Tub, with his shoulders dropped and with a huge sigh, spoke about his feelings about the Hmong community not accepting sports as a career focus over college, "I feel like they [the Hmong community] wouldn't support what I would do [sports] because everybody goes to college, they listen to their parents and stuff." Similar to Hmong daughters being obedient, as mentioned by Sheng and Zer, Tub felt this as well being a Hmong male. Based on the participant responses, Hmong parents may lack understanding of the significance of extracurriculars or other majors in

college a student can select from in addition to career development. Furthermore, Mai shared that the culture is changing:

> I feel like I am learning a lot about how Hmong culture is changing in America. I feel more push to help the Hmong community in the future….our Hmong community has been changing differently alongside American culture….. I feel like the Hmong culture is fading away as we try to adapt to American culture.

The group members felt the Hmong culture impacted their college and post-secondary planning; it was typical for the participants to all agree that they have similar experiences at home. Meng and Sheng shared a similar message in that they all experienced the same expectations, "…so there was a time in the group where, um, we were, like, sharing information, like, about family and how we represent ourselves, like, almost, like, everybody was, like, the same as me or similar as me. And we do have some differences, but overall, we are similar." This matched the identity development they shared collectively as a group.

Subtheme 1.4.a – Participant identity was supported through group work.

It was typical that participants were willing to reflect on and share their identity in the interviews and with other group members. It was also typical that they developed a sense that their identity was unique to themselves; though they all identified as Hmong and that this was part of their identity, they had individual parts of their identity that made them uniquely themselves. For example, Sheng smirked and giggled when she shared how similar she was to her father, "I just have a thing, sometimes I show up or just slack off and I'm like, "Yes, this is me. This is who I am, but sometimes I blame my dad for saying, we're kind of alike." Yet at the same time, her mother wanted her to be obedient, and if she were to hear her talking back, they would be surprised and ask why she was disobedient when she was, "supposed to be obedient."

Sheng then shared that her mom would tell her with a frustrated voice, “Who will marry you in the future?” Sheng would arguably replied back, saying, "If nobody wants to marry me, that's on them.” Sheng shrugged it off and laughed demonstrating her pride.

Zer wrote a statement in her journal about her identity after a session: “I learned that a lot of people see us as quiet & timid. I feel comfortable enough to share some personal things because we’re all Hmong. Leaving this room, I’ll take what others must share & try to understand them.” Zer, given she is one of the more vocal ones in the group, may not agree that all Hmong students are quiet and timid, however she was mindful that most of her group members are and how that may be portrayed in the Hmong community.

Pao mentioned two statements about his identity development. The first is that being the oldest in the group, he showed his strive for independence yet culturally, the respect for his parents by saying, “I'd say I don't need their [parents] help because I am able to solve it, to go through and to move on from it after I've done it. I'd say that. But I don't want to be prideful or arrogant towards them.” Pao, being a young Hmong male, will be on his way to college within 7 months and has developed a drive to be independent. The second was in his journal, where he wrote, “I’m thinking that I might reveal more of my feminine side, despite being a guy. I could make more friends that way, and I’m being more true to myself.” In group, when he shared this statement, he lowered his voice, and immediately looked around the room for someone to validate him. After all, sharing something private, which is not often accepted in the Hmong community, was a huge relief. Then, Meng looked at him and said that he was brave to share something personal. Zer and Sheng both agreed, and they smiled at him. Pao received some acknowledgement from the group, and this may have been his first step towards understanding his identity.

For this domain, family members played a significant role in influencing the decision-making of the participants. Extended family members were sought for support and resources, while school counselors were not. Generally, the participants relied on family members because they believed family members had more experience with college and career planning. Some have family members who were currently in college or have already graduated from college and were seeking careers. Participants also felt they must make decisions that impact their family members. Family members believed that if they went to college, they would have more a successful career with a good income. Some participants mentioned that they must go to college and then, upon graduating, return to their family with a successful career to help the family. Some family members regret not being able to go to college; therefore, they encouraged the participant to not follow in their footsteps. Decisions about college based on gender and cultural expectations were brought up by half the participants. The female participants were limited with their college plans more than the male participants. The female participants shared that they were expected to do certain chores at home that were gender-based. Also, participants acknowledged their identity was impacted by the Hmong culture.

Domain 2: Barriers

Participants shared a variety of barriers that impact and influence their decision-making when planning their future. The barriers mentioned by the participants are the themes. The first theme is [2.1] The English language with a subtheme [2.1.a] Participants acknowledged they lack educational skills, the second theme [2.2] The cost of college as a barrier is the third theme is [2.3] Understanding American culture was difficult for both participants and their parents. Each theme will be described below in more detail with participant quotes. Table 4 is an overview of Domain 2: Barriers.

Table 4
Domain 2: Barriers

- Theme 2.1- The English Language is a barrier to education.
  - Subtheme 2.1.a - Participants acknowledged they lack educational skills.
- Theme 2.2 - The cost of college is a barrier.
- Theme 2.3 - Understanding the American culture was difficult for both participants and their parents.

Theme 2.1 – The English language is a barrier to education.

It was typical that participants identified language as a barrier to communicating with others and participating in their school setting. For example, Mai shared a memorable session during the group where the participants were discussing the challenges and struggles Hmong people face when it comes to education. Mai said,

> I've also found myself lacking education compared to other people who are not Hmong, so that's why it stood out to me. For example, when I was younger, reading was really hard for me because English is my second language. So whenever I read, I read slower or there's some words that I don't know, but other people knew already, so it makes me feel like I lack education.

Mai with a calm voice spoke of how she believed she lacked education when comparing herself to her classmates. Most of her classmates were white students. When sharing this, her eyes looked up as if she was trying to recall a memory that was meaningful. The soft tone in her voice hinted that her memory was of a time that was embarrassing, knowing she read slower than others and that she did not know certain words when she compared herself to her classmates.

Tub echoed Mai's statement in the group, and it appeared the other participants agreed as they all started chatting amongst themselves and nodding their heads in agreement while in a session. During the interview, Tub shared that he struggled with the English language and

therefore struggled to communicate with others, referring to his classmates who are non-Hmong. He said:

> I think I'll face barriers against language and communication because, um, sometimes I don't really get what other people are saying to me and communication is something I kinda struggle with. 'Cause I'm not good at talking to other people or getting close to them. 'Cause, um, Hmong is my first language, right? So sometimes when they talk to me, American people, and they use big words or, uh, words that I don't know, then I don't get what they're trying to tell me.

Tub shared his concerns with the English language, specifically when others use words he was not familiar with. Using bigger words implied words he may not have heard of or used. He further goes on to say that he just pretends by nodding his head and agreeing just to help the conversation flow, but truthfully, he does not even know what the conversation was about. There was a sense of embarrassment while sharing this, yet he looked at the researcher confidently, as this is how he has made it this far. Given that the other group members agreed with him about the language barrier, their experiences were universal.

Meng shared similar barriers as Tub and Mai. In response to the researcher's question, "What other skills would you like to improve upon that you think will be helpful for you towards college and career?" Meng responded, "I didn't understand the grammar of English. I mean, I understand a few, but not a lot. I'm a slow reader, so I can't really comprehend a lot of stuff." While his head was down, he paused for a bit and then shared that he knew he was not good at English. He said he failed English classes in the past, which was not intentional, but due to lacking skills and possibly drive. He said that grammar was difficult for him, along with reading. He felt he could not comprehend what he reads. The English language as a barrier could manifest

into receiving low grades in classes hindering his competitiveness and confidence of going to college. It was typical that participants felt language was a barrier for them and their parents; therefore, if the educator or professional was bilingual in both Hmong and English, communication would be easier.

Subtheme 2.1.a – Participants acknowledged they lack educational skills.

Similar to lacking English language skills, participants shared how they lacked educational skills based on language. It was typical that participants felt they were lacking educational skills when compared to their peers. Some shared that they are behind in their classes, and some have failed a class.

Sheng shared in the interview that, while half smiling and reluctant to share, she eventually spoke in a soft toned voice, “I feel like I'm not that great in school. Because I don't know, it's just something I'm envious of other people, they have higher GPA or education than me. I'm just like, "I wish I could be like you", not skip school or anything like that. I wish it was like that.” Prior to this statement, the researcher asked the question, “Did other group members say or do anything that influenced you and if so, what was it?” Sheng was sharing that when Pao shared that he was accepted to two colleges and how he now had the option to choose between two options, she said, “Lucky, I want to be like that, I just get accepted to college and just dropping down the other one.” She then smiled and agreed with the researcher that she was envious of Pao's opportunities while she was not doing well in school based on her GPA, class attendance, and class engagement. She wished she had those options too.

When discussing barriers, Mai shared her struggles with the English language saying she realized she was “lacking education compared to other people who are not Hmong.” She shared a specific example by saying, “When I was younger, reading was really hard for me because

English is my second language. So whenever I read, I read slower or there's some words that I don't know but other people know already, so it makes me feel like I lack education." Although she understood this about herself, she was on the edge of her seat and may have been hesitant to share that she has grit and endurance when comparing herself, who knows two languages, to those who knew only one. Similar to Mai, Meng described himself as someone who, "lack educational skills." He said, "for lack of educational skills, as of right now, I'm falling behind and I should probably start getting serious studying." Meng understood how real this was by seeing firsthand how failing grades led to failing classes that impacted graduation. Mai's experience, although real, seemed to be ingrained as a perception and understanding that persisted rather than a goal to overcome.

Theme 2.2 – The cost of college is a barrier.

In general, participants identified the financial hardship of paying for post-secondary education as a barrier to college. They identified this barrier both in acknowledging the cost of attending college and in their personal, family, and/or future financial situations. For example, Zer blushed but sounded agitated when she said, "I know that my parents, we don't make a lot in a year, and we also have a big family, and so if all of us want to go to college, it's going to be a lot of money. So that's something I'm scared of. That's why I want to do really good in high school." She appeared stuck and stressed while sitting in the chair, processing what she just said. Being a member of a big family does make it difficult; therefore, she could not expect her parents to help her. She is driven to do well in school, so she will not put that burden on her family members. When the Financial Aid presenter spoke, Zer asked a lot of questions about scholarships, grants, and housing. She even asked the presenter, who was a Hmong woman, how

she got to college and how she paid for it. Zer was really engaged, and she was excited as she was on the edge of her seat during the entire session.

Different from Zer, Pao was direct and firm, saying, “The only [barrier] I can really think of right now is probably money wise since I'm, I'm in the dorms and that adds on to, like, a college tuition so it'll be, like, a lot more expensive than going to a college." Pao as worried about the costs of living in the dorms and a tuition bill. He appeared to have accepted this more than the other group members. It may be that he is a senior and Zer is a sophomore. Meng mentioned how he didn’t want to accumulate any debt. He shared,

> Because I'm not really good at saving money, and as of right now, I'm just working to get as much money as I can right now to see if I can go to get into community college, so I can just pay that off right...So I don't have to worry about debt...[because] My parents...I know that they're still in debt with some stuff.
>
> Meng must have learned from his parents and siblings about debt and how to avoid it given

what he knew of himself and how he manages his money. During the interview, he also shared how he was “falling behind,” with his current classes and how he should be more serious about school by saying, “I should probably start getting serious studying and for, some financial barriers, as of right now, I feel like I'm not making enough money, and maybe I could probably try to apply for a scholarship and for them to help me." He was aware of how scholarships can help support him with his college goals. During the financial aid session, he did not ask many questions of the presenter, even when provided with questions he could ask. He sat there listening. Perhaps he was sensing he needs to take his academics more seriously if he is to be independent in finding ways to pay for college.

Mai, with her calm posture and direct eye contact, shared how, “she would prefer they [parents] could help me a bit with those things, but it's also because my family isn't really financially stable, so I'm kind of in the between.” She was in a bind between what she wanted and what she could actually acquire. She wanted to ask for financial support from her family for college, but she understood her family may not be able to support her. She then appeared to gather herself a bit, as maybe something bothered her. She shared:

> Cause I know that my parents, we don't make a lot in a year, and we also have a big family, and so if all of us want to go to college, it's going to be a lot of money. So that's something I'm scared of. That's why I want to do really good in high school.”

She may have realized that if she were to go to college, in order to afford it, she would have to support herself and she would have to do well in school. Mai’s brother Tub also expressed some worry and concerns about the size of his family and how he could afford college, “I guess that too, because me and my sister, we're in the same year, so we would both have to go to college at the same time. Then I feel like that'd be a lot to pay.” Mai and Tub both appeared stressed about this. They did not share any detailed plans for a solution or if they were going to work together to find a family solution so they could each meet their own college and career goals. Unconsciously, it seemed they were competing with one another, and that was something they realized but did not discuss together yet as they both stared at each other and quickly looked away at the other group members. The group members also did not ask.

Lastly, Sheng confidently spoke out and said, “After high school I want to take a year break and work before going to college so that I can have my own money to support me and with that along my mom helping me with my college.” She smirked a bit after sharing this, as she

knew she needed help but also wanted independence. Being the only daughter, she also knew her mom would support her.

Theme 2.3 – Understanding the American culture was difficult for both participants and their parents.

It was typical that participants felt they did not understand American culture; therefore, they struggled more when it came to feeling comfortable and understanding opportunities from the school. For example, Pao shared a memory of Hmong students not taking opportunities to meet non-Hmong peers to form relationships. He said, “there's so few of us so we can only really be more open towards our own race compared to the others since we're more similar to them...and with the Hmong student population here being very small, it's quite reserved as well." Pao described that there was a natural connection among Hmong students, especially when there were not many of them.

Zer shared another example of cultural difference, describing how her Hmong friends were not involved and engaged in school opportunities when compared to non-Hmong peers. While in the interview, Zer sat up straight in her chair with a mature and serious look when the researcher asked her what she thought about how she compared herself to non-Hmong students when it came to opportunities. She said,

> I think the difference is how Hmong students, they didn't really be a part of any activities, some were, but from what I see, most of them are not. And right now I see that all of my friends, they're not doing anything after school. They either just stay after school to go to the gas station and have fun, or they just go to work and they're not a part of any other clubs other than the Hmong club. They're not a part of any activities like sports or

whatever. They just either go to work or go home. So I think that's the difference between Hmong kids and other kids.

Zer sounded frustrated. She alluded to her Hmong friends, who were not involved in extra

curriculars, and how they preferred to spend time in places that does not benefit them in the future. She seemed to acknowledge that her Hmong friends may not be aware of other opportunities available to them in the school or in their community when compared to non-Hmong students. Zer was driven towards college, but with her Hmong friends not being involved in school events and extracurriculars, she was in a bind. It appeared she wondered if she should focus on peers who have a similar drive as her. Also, it appeared that her acculturation level was different, or she was more driven for opportunities than her Hmong peers.

Another example of the American culture being difficult for the participant was when, Mai shared a moment where her mother suggested a career that she had little interest in: “My mom wants me to do computer work. She wants me to sit behind a computer and do those things, but computer working is one of my weakness. I'm not really good at using computers.” Even more Mai shared during the group that her parent’s do not even know what computer science was, but they just tell her she should do it. Mai was frustrated that she felt she could not choose a career path on her own. During the group, she compared how non-Hmong parents allowed their students to choose a career while she could not. The other participants agreed and supported her frustration by validating that they experienced it too. The participants felt that their parents do not understand American culture, and they feel suppressed by their parents. Furthermore, during the interview, the researcher and Mai were discussing how non-Hmong families may support their children more than Hmong parents. Mai didn’t say much as she was short with her

responses, but she hesitated said, “Hmong parents suppress their students more than others, yeah, I guess I feel sad and disappointed.” Mai may have felt she was held back more than her non-Hmong peers. When the researcher asked her to elaborate, she looked up and thought for a bit, and then said, “With Hmong students, we kind of know a bunch of the same things, like our parents, how they suppress us in doing stuff, but then with other students, because their parents support them with what they want to do and give them help, it's a little different. So we don't really see eye to eye with things." Zer shared her comparison of non-Hmong families and how they support their students with sports versus his parents.

> If they're [non-Hmong] not part of any sports, they're not going to get scholarships to go to good colleges. And for Hmong parents, since people came here at different times, we don't really know. Some parents are more traditional and some parents are more modern, but from what I see, a lot of parents are still really traditional.

Zer believes that more traditional parents do not understand or support their student with their college and post-secondary planning versus Hmong parents who were modern, suggesting Hmong parents who are more acculturated may be able to better support their students. Similarly, Mai shared a conflict between herself and her parents:

> My parents, they don't really know much about the American culture, so they were afraid that we would be influenced in a bad way because they don't know much about it...if I was in their shoes, I would understand why they're doing it...But at the same time, I also wanted to pursue what I would like.

Mai seems to be able to sense some concerns Hmong parents have about their children if they were influenced by the dominant culture and how that could bring change to the home. Knowing this, Mai seems to still be committed to pursuing what she wanted for herself.

Concisely, participant responses revealed there were barriers that influenced the participants college and career planning. It was commonly mentioned that speaking and understanding the English language was a barrier for the participants and their parents. Some participants felt they were slower readers. Some felt they were not able to understand their peers and teachers due to their lack of understanding certain words, making comprehension and communication difficult. Comprehension issues led to lack of connection with non-Hmong peers at school and understanding of one another socially. Participants wondered if they were academically prepared for college. Communicating this to their teachers and non-Hmong peers was difficult too.

Another barrier was the cost of college. Participants were unsure of how they could afford college tuition. Some were hoping to acquire good grades in hopes of getting a scholarship. Although their parents fully supported them in making the choice to go to college, their ability to afford college was a task that was left for them to figure out on their own, and the participants knew not to depend on their parents.

Lastly, another barrier was how American culture (Dominant culture) influenced their decision-making about opportunities. Many compared themselves or other Hmong students to non-Hmong students and saw differences in how opportunities were considered. Even more, some parents did not know how to support their student with college and career planning, and they were not aware of resources to provide for their student. Participants believed that traditional parents do not understand or support their students as much as Hmong parents, who are more modern or acculturated.

Domain 3: Group Experience

Participants shared their group experience. In particular, the participants shared commonalities observed in one another. They also suggested future group logistics and dynamics, and the members all believed that the group was very helpful to college and career planning and their identity. The first theme is [3.1] participants sharing what they had in common with a subtheme [3.1.a] that the group members and presenters are all alike and help normalize their experiences; the second theme is [3.2] group logistics and planning for future small groups; and lastly, the third theme is [3.3] group sessions that were helpful to the participants. Each theme will be described below in more detail, with quotes. Table 5 is an overview of Domain 3: Group Experience.

Table 5
Domain 3: Group Experience

- Theme 3.1 Participants learned what they had in common
  - Subtheme 3.1.a A group with members and presenters who are alike, helped normalize their experiences
- Theme 3.2 Group logistics and planning for future small group work
- Theme 3.3 Group sessions were helpful

Theme 3.1 – Through group, participants learned what they had in common.

In general, after participating in the group, the participants shared how they felt about the other participants. One particular theme was how they noticed that they were all modest and reserved. During the group, when this commonality was brought up, the group members all agreed that this is what they have observed as well. In the interview, Tub shared with the researcher that “the other people in the group have the same as me [Hmong] quiet and stuff." Also, Tub wrote in his journal that “All of us were quiet and that our families are caring.” Meng echoed this by also saying, “I realized that a lot of Hmong people are kind of quiet and shy.” Even more, Zer supported this by also identifying the same traits, but expanded a bit more saying,

> During the group sessions, a lot of people see us as we're [Hmong] shy and we're [Hmong] timid, if that's the word for it. And yeah, I was like, wait. And I was thinking in my head, I was like, that's true. Because I do notice that we do that a lot, and a lot of people don't think that we're outspoken. We (Hmong) are, we just don't show them because they don't want to be comfortable around us or the other way around."
>
> Although Zer agreed to others seeing them as quiet and timid, she shared the rationale was

due to comfort. Zer believed that Hmong students could be outspoken but lacked this due to feeling uncomfortable in the school. Zer wrote in her journal that she felt comfortable enough to share things in a group because the participants were Hmong, but less comfortable with non-Hmong peers. Uniquely, Zer pushed herself, as she was the one who wanted a group that was more inclusive of other non-Hmong participants. The group members did not appear to be shocked about this, but rather, they smiled at one another in a prideful way that they had something else in common.

Commonly, the participants also mentioned wanting to gain confidence; some wished for others to change; and some would have liked for the other group members to talk more during the group. Pao shared during the interview that he wished the other group members would "speak up more, gain confidence, confidence with themselves and how they act." Pao further explained that "since there's not really a lot of us [Hmong], and we're all in different grades and we're pretty much different culturally compared to the other racial students at the school. And there's so few of us." Pao was referencing how the school has a smaller population of Hmong students, and due to differences in acculturation and grade levels amongst them, they struggled to

connect with other non-Hmong students. Although the group members agreed when this was brought up in a session, Pao had higher expectations for the group members:

> I feel like I wish a few of them [group members] spoke out a little bit more...I wish they would, like, speak out more so that they could, like, gain the confidence to be, like, confident about themselves, how, how they wanna act, how they wanna be so that they don't, they wouldn't be, like, I guess, scared about college or, like, going through the rest of high school."

Pao sounded like an older brother by wanting the other group members to not feel ashamed of who they were by saying "It's hard because, well, it's what I think the other students are like, they're scared of being more open. They're scared of being themselves. They're scared of being criticized by others about who they are and who they want to be." Pao cared for the group members and was pushing them not to limit themselves or let others judge them due to who they are.

Subtheme 3.1.a – A group with members and presenters who are alike helped normalize their experiences.

In general, the participant's identity, being Hmong, was supported by seeing other Hmong participants in the group who had similar college and career goals. Participants noticed that they had similar challenges, goals, and personalities. For example, during the interview, Sheng paused to answer the researcher's question about what she thought was most meaningful about the group. After gathering herself, she looked up and said, "I think it was meaningful because we all have, like, the same ideal, like, what our parents or other people say about college." She saw that it was common for other Hmong families to want their students to go to college after high school. In addition, Meng responded by saying, "There was a time in the group where, um, we

were, like, sharing information, like, about family and how we represent ourselves, like, almost, like, everybody was, like, the same as me or similar as me. And we do have some differences but overall similar." When Meng shared this, he was excited and rocked back and forth in his chair.

The participants all agreed that the Hmong college student panel helped the participants relate to them and motivated them. It was typical that the participants believed the Hmong presenters made them feel more comfortable, and they were helpful in the group as the participants felt they could relate to the presenters and the topics discussed, such as financial aid and college. Zer said in the interview that she enjoyed this session the most. She explained that.

> I saw them [Hmong college panel] as my older siblings and I was like, wow, they're doing so good in college. I want to do that too. I want to be as good as them. That really motivates me because I love seeing how Hmong students are.

Zer was able to connect with the group panel members and saw them as her own. She said, “I feel comfortable enough to share some personal things because we’re all Hmong.” Meng also was excited about the panel and shared a similar experience of how motivating it was for him,

> It [Hmong college student panel] was very motivating for me because me, I think college is super hard and difficult, but now that I think of it, it's not really different. It's basically like high school, but at a next level. Because me, I'm also Hmong too, and I can relate to them [Hmong college student panel] too.

Being able to relate and connect with the presenters helped build comfort and a connection between the group members and the Hmong college student panel members. Meng also said, “Almost all of them [Hmong college student panel] were struggling at first and then later on, it started becoming easier and easier...I know a lot of people are nervous and scared at

first when they first go to college, and then later on they say that it becomes easier and less stressful. The Hmong college student panel may have normalized some stressors Meng was wondering about since he knew he was struggling in school and has failed some classes. With a sigh of relief, Tub shared a similar experience. He said, “What stood out to me the most was that they [Hmong college student panel] didn't find out what they wanted to do until college and then switched to, they switched their stuff, majors and stuff in college.” This was reassuring knowing Tub did not need to decide immediately but was comforted that he has time to make a decision, just as the other panel members shared.

Theme 3.2 - Group logistics and planning for future small group work.

In general, the participants enjoyed the group. They suggested a few logistical changes for future small group work, such as inviting more students to join along with non-Hmong students. Zer and Pao had similar suggestions of including others instead of just Hmong students. Zer with a big smile and anticipation said, “Instead of just doing Hmong kids, I think we should do other, like, minorities in the school because I know that as a minority, we don't really get much help. Like, nobody really understands us.” Zer has seen the benefit of grouping and how it has been able to connect those who were similar at many levels. Pao quickly agreed and suggested,

> I guess it would bring in more people that would have similar interests other than Hmong people, Hmong students. So the Hmong students in that club would connect with the other racial students in which they have similar interests, so they would, I guess, have more friends outside of class and school.

This could imply that affinity based BIPOC groups can both meet the needs of

students. Unlike Zer and Pao, Tub said he was “very comfortable in the group talking to people that I was related to. Uh, not related to, like, they had, like, similar experiences. We were all Hmong, so I was comfortable with everybody."

Overall, the participants enjoyed the group, sharing similar feedback as Zer, “The group was really incredible for me because I really enjoyed going in every single day. Not every single day, but every single time I go in there, it was like really eye-opening, which is another word. And it was really fun because I got to know more about myself and more about people that were in there.” Meng throughout the group was one of the subtle participants. Taking a quick moment to think before sharing, he said, “Um, I wish I could've asked more questions but I was just, um, shy and not very confident.”

Theme 3.3 – The group sessions were helpful.

In general, the group was helpful because participants were able to learn about post-secondary planning and some particulars, such as scholarships and college. It was typical for participants to feel encouraged to go to college after their experience in the group, as evidenced by Tub when he excitedly shared that, “Before, like, joining the group, I didn't really want to go to college. I didn't really think about college too, like, after the group, like, but they convinced me to go to college, encouraged me to go.” He further explained that “I got to know what college was like more and it made me want to go to college.” Since then, Tub was convinced to go to college. He was hesitant given his parent’s disapproval of his sports focus; however, a turning point for him was when the college panel members reassured him he had time to think about this major before declaring it.

Other group members, such as Sheng, shared that the group “was pretty helpful for students who were starting to look into college, and also to who was already going to go to

college.” Sheng was a senior, and it was apparent she felt the group helped her just as much as the other group members in different grades. Sheng extended her comment more to include scholarships by saying, “I feel like it was helpful from the scholarships because the scholarships actually give out a lot of stuff, and although I was kind of late for it, but that's on me. I feel like it could give better for the future seniors or kids in the future, it could help them with the college.” Sheng was independent and wanted to show her mom she was able to pay for college by herself. She has the comfort of knowing her mom would help, but she was eager to try it for herself first.

Zer was one of the more engaged individuals in the group. She said, “Personally, I enjoyed all sessions because every single day I would come in, it was really eye-opening to me, and I really enjoyed every single second in there. And it was really fun because I got to learn more about myself and my peers.” Zer shared earlier that she wanted to be involved in extracurriculars but felt she was limited due to her classes and her busy schedule helping her parents. Knowing this group was during a homebase period that did not interrupt their academic schedule, this group met her needs. Being one of the group leaders, she may have felt responsible for being there to help share and exchange ideas with others.

Likewise, Meng shared that he enjoyed the group too by saying, “Since this, since this was, like, one of my first, uh, time being, like, in a group, um, I think it was pretty, pretty helpful. Um, and I learned a lot from being in the group.” He also mentioned that he learned a lot of information about colleges that he did not know before. Although he was mostly disengaged in the conversations in the group, he was a listener; he paid attention, got along with the other members, and benefited.

To sum up, participant responses revealed the group participants' experience in this domain. Through participating in group, the members shared that they had some traits in

common, such as their personalities and how others may perceive them. Participants described themselves as not being comfortable in their school to truly portray who they are, although they did agree they were more comfortable around other Hmong students. Although the participants agreed to this, one participant encouraged and wanted the other group members and Hmong students to speak out more and show more confidence in who they are. Even more, participants noticed that they all had very similar college and career goals. For example, they all had parents who wanted them to go to college. The Hmong college student panel helped confirm their identity and experiences with college and career planning. The participants felt motivated by the panel, and some saw the panel members collectively as older siblings.

For future group work, participants suggested including other minority students. Although the group members felt more comfortable around Hmong students only, they also wanted to include other minority students as they felt this would help them normalize their experiences and opportunities. The members suggested BIPOC affinity groups.

Lastly, the group was very helpful to the participants. The participants all shared that they learned about college and career planning, financial aid, and their identity. One participant even suggested meeting more often. All participants were motivated to go to college.

Domain 4: Post-Secondary Plans

Participants shared the evolution and development of their post-secondary plans across their lifetimes to where they are currently. The participant's confidence to attend college was high; however, their confidence in a career was low. The first theme [4.1] is career development, and the second theme [4.2] is participant confidence about college. In this domain, the participants described the learning that took place that influenced them to change. Also, the participants shared that they all want to go to college, but they lack confidence in a specific

career. Each theme will be described below in more detail, with quotes. Table 6 is an overview of Domain 4: College and Career Plans.

Table 6
Domain 4: College and Career Plans

- Theme 4.1 Career Development
- Theme 4.2 Participant confidence about college was high and career planning was low

Theme 4.1 – Career Development.

It was typical that the participants evolved from having dreams of pursuing many different types of careers to now being more "realistic" in their pursuits as they moved or progressed into high school. During the interview, Tub sat back in his chair, staring into the space before him as he reflected on his past to share that in elementary and middle school, he wanted to be a doctor, a scientist, or an astronaut. However, at this time in high school, he was unsure. He recalled watching a lot of “movies where they just went to the moon and stuff and I just wanted to do that.” Tub described himself as having a big imagination when he was younger, but he noticed he has changed. He may have realized that where he is now, he was unsure, as so much has changed and that feeling was unsettling.

Relatively, Pao said that from kindergarten to 9th grade, he wanted to try an array of careers. One was to work with animals, and another was to be an artist. That transitioned to wonderment with being a musician, a singer, a songwriter, and even a volleyball player. He also described himself as getting into careers that were more general, meaning careers that he and his parents were more familiar with since they were more common, “I just changed it to something more general, which is how I got into engineering, robotics and stuff.” He shared in the group that this change was mostly due to him trying to find an interest as he became more serious with his academics and post-secondary planning.

Participants found they did not have the training or information needed to pursue particular occupations, so they were thinking about pursuing a career based on what they learned. For example, during the interview with Tub and during the group, he shared multiple times how he wanted to be a professional tennis player, but he did not have the proper training to become one. He said, “I changed my mind because I got scared that I wasn't as good as the others [with tennis]. Because I watched a bunch of tennis games. And at my age, 15 year olds playing tennis. And they were just a lot better than me, so I just decided not to do it. Well, they were just a lot better than me. Because when I played tennis, I wasn't as good as them at serving and everything else.” Tub’s only training for tennis was from taking gym class in school. His family was not able to find resources to support him, and they were not able to afford any formal training to prepare him. He appeared frustrated, as he may have been processing how he was unable to pursue this due to a lack of skills and parental support.

Lastly, Zer’s reason for wanting to be a lawyer was from seeing Hmong women struggle with oppression in the community. She said, “From seeing what Hmong women go through in abusive relationships and just seeing how people get a lot of... They don't have a lot of justice in that area, so I would go in there and help as much as I can.” She also wrote in her journal, “I learned that I truly do want to become a lawyer and go through with it. I feel happy because some student’s answers were funny and nice to hear about. What I’ll be taking with me is how I should look more into the skills of a lawyer and I’ll try more fun classes.” While Zer was sharing her interest in becoming a lawyer, the other participants agreed and even commented that she would be excellent given that she was the most talkative participant in the group and she has a more outspoken personality when compared to the other members.

Theme 4.2 – Participant confidence about college and career planning varied but was generally low.

In general, the participants found the group work to be informative as it relates to college and career planning. For example, Sheng said, “I feel great knowing what other obstacles can get in the way of going to college. It makes me think of I can go to my dream college.” Sheng felt more prepared to pursue college. Even after sharing this, she sat back in her chair, crossed her arms, and smiled. Even more, Pao said that he learned of the many resources in college that are there to support students. He also then said, “From what I've researched about engineering, I feel like it doesn't really suit my style or what I want to pursue in the, for the rest of my life.” This realization appears to be recent, as this was not what he mentioned during the sessions. He sounded more hesitant about deciding on a career but was confident that he would follow through with college by writing in his journal, “I’m feeling a little more confident when going to college. What I’m taking with me is that despite the struggles that happen in college, you’ll persevere through it.” Although the participants anticipated planning for college, they were not confident about choosing a career.

The group sessions increased their confidence in pursuing college; however, the participants were not confident in selecting a career. Some were confused and just not sure what to choose for a career after college. For example, Tub said the group was helpful because he learned more about what college was like and it made him want to go to college; however, he followed up with this: “I want to go to college now, but I don't know what I want to major in or do in the future still.” Tub lacked confidence in choosing a career, possibly due to his parents wanting him to choose a career that does not involve sports. Tub sat back in his chair, processing this in his head as he remained calm and composed.

In another example, Zer said, “My plan after high school is to go to college and study, um... Right now I'm not sure what major, or minor, because I'm still kind of confused on that whole entire idea.” Zer journaled, “What I’ll be taking with me is how I should look more into the skills of a lawyer.” She may have been wondering how she can build the skills to prepare her to be a lawyer. After mentioning this, she paused for a bit, turned her head to the side, and said, “Becoming a lawyer's really hard and how everything's really gon- is going to be hard, and, um, I'm still pretty confident, but I still think that, like, I should have a plan B, so yeah. That's what I'm working on right now.” Zer has openly shared how she wanted to be a lawyer, and one of her motivators is how Hmong women are oppressed in the community. She understands this was a challenging career given that she is bicultural.

Another example was Meng saying that since group, he learned more about college and career but was not really sure, “but will probably say math,” because he likes math and are good with, “coding and aesthetics and stuff.” Also, he said, “I'm not really confident because as of right now, I don't know what I'm going for.” Meng appeared to be confused and had not made concrete goals to look toward. He seemed to be reiterating what his family expects of him, but he has not decided on his own.

Sheng shared a memorable time as she smiled and giggled about her experience. She said, “I tested it out on my cousins, and we were just dying her hair for fun, I don't know, I like the smell of it. I find it interesting how different hair dye can impact on different hair colors, and so I chose to do that.” She has experimented with dying hair on family members, and the results may have been pleasant to reassure her that this was a career she should continue. She seems to also understand that she needed more experience to gain confidence.

In summary, participant responses showed a college and career planning domain where the participants discussed the changes in their career plans throughout their lifetime. Many shared how they had big imaginations and a few careers or aspirations when they were younger. Many shared how they eventually changed their career to one that was more general or common and that they and their family were familiar with. The participants shared how most had no formal training or experience in a certain career field and therefore felt they were not prepared. One participant, who was more confident about her career choice, shared that she wanted to be a lawyer due to the cultural oppression of Hmong women.

Lastly, the group was informative and helpful for college and career planning for the participants. They felt confident in choosing college as the path after high school; however, all but one participant was confident with a specific career. Participants described themselves as confused, lacking training or experience, or still deciding on what they want to focus on while in college.

Domain 5: School Environment

Participants discussed how their high school impacted their college and career planning. Participants also shared their awareness of the resources in their school for college and career planning. The participants felt they struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers in their school. Also, the participants identified specific educators in their school who are supportive of them and their skills. Each theme will be described below in more detail, with quotes. Table 7 is an overview of Domain 5: School Environment.

Table 7
Domain 5: School Environment

- Theme 5.1 Participants know the resources in their school.
- Theme 5.2 Participants struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers in schools.
- Theme 5.3 Participants were able to identify educators who can support them in school.

Theme 5.1- Participants know the resources in their school.

It was typical that participants knew about resources in the school to get college information (e.g., college visits, AVID, school counselors, and classes) but they did not always take advantage of the opportunities. For example, Pao shared that he was aware of college visits that occurred in his school, along with counselors who could provide information about college and scholarships; however, he did not utilize them. He journaled, “I learned that there are many resources in college that are here to support students.” As stated in Domain 1, he used family members instead. He also shared that he did not know his school counselor and did not meet with him regularly. He did express that he would have appreciated school counselors initiating a formal meeting to discuss college and career planning. He shared this in the group, and the other group members nodded their heads and chatted amongst themselves, saying that some of them are just really nervous, but they would love to meet with their school counselor more frequently if they would initiate the meeting. Similarly, Mai said that the school was “preparing me for plans after high school by giving me the classes and the knowledge I will need to get into college.” However, she also felt that the school lacked classes that taught her specific content on how to get into college. She said, “I haven't seen how this school is providing me with learning about college and career other than this group thing." She then blushed while avoiding eye contact, gave an awkward smile, and said, “I think my counselor could help me, because there's not a lot of people I'm connected to.” Tub also shared that he took a class about finance and investment and believed it was a helpful class. He shared, “I feel like if we had more of those classes, maybe more people would choose those classes to help them in the future.”

Another example was Zer in that she knows the school offers college visits and the AVID program; however, during the group meetings, she thought she was too young to start the visits. She planned to start them her junior year. For AVID, she said, “we also have AVID, which is a

path that we can take, but right now I'm not taking it because my schedule's too full." In the group, she felt the program hindered her options to get into certain classes and, therefore, was not part of her goal. On the same note, Sheng shared that she did not talk to her counselor much but has spoken to the college and career counselor.

Theme 5.2 – Participants struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers in the school.

In general, the participants struggled to connect with their peers in the classroom, specifically non-Hmong peers. The participants felt their identity and differences in cultural values may be attributed to it. Zer emphasized this during the interview with a serious yet discrete tone while avoiding eye contact with the researcher. She said, "Whenever I'm with people who aren't Hmong, I notice how I get really embarrassed to even talk or to even be there in their presence because it's so overwhelming for me. But then whenever I'm with my Hmong friends, I'm so outspoken, I'm so much more comfortable." This was evident in the group because Zer was the most engaged and talkative; however, she presented herself completely differently in class. Even Sheng shared that outside of the group, Zer was one group member who encouraged her to talk and engage more. Zer further explained that she wanted to connect all the Hmong students, although she understood that may be impossible. Zer was not her true self when around non-Hmong peers, and she believed her real personality comes out more when around other Hmong peers. This may be the reason why Pao bravely said the following during a group session:

> The environment of the school plays a lot to the Hmong students at our school, since there's not really a lot of us, and we're all in different grades and we're pretty much different culturally compared to the other racial students at the school. And there's so a few of us. So we can only really be more open towards our own race compared to the

> others since we're more similar to them...And with the Hmong student population here being very small, it's quite reserved as well… It's hard because, well, it's what I think the other students are like, they're scared of being more open. They're scared of being themselves. They're scared of being criticized by others about who they are and who they want to be.

When Pao shared this in the group, the other group members nodded and agreed that this was how they all felt. There was a moment of silence as each member sat in silence by themselves, processing what they just heard and how it resonated with them. Mai and Sheng shared that, being English language learners (ELL), they didn't want to get teased by other peers. Since there were not many Hmong students in their school, they felt isolated. Hmong students naturally connected with other Hmong students. Pao believed Hmong students in the school lack confidence in who they are and that they tried to avoid being criticized by other non-Hmong peers. Pao appeared annoyed and saddened by this.

Theme 5.3 – Participants were able to identify educators who can support them in school.

In general, the participants could easily identify school supports who could help them prepare for college, including teachers, counselors, post-secondary planning, and activities. All the participants were able to identify their counselor, and some were able to identify a teacher. Sheng shared that she did not take the initiative to meet with her counselor at all until her senior year. When she finally did, she nervously shared a time she met with her counselor because she was unsure about her eligibility to graduate, but the counselor reassured her she would be ok. She felt supported, and her stress was relieved. Mai was able to identify her counselor as a close contact because she was not close to any of her other teachers besides a music teacher. She wrote that her music teacher was her main source of motivation to continue playing music. She said,

“because there's teachers I'm more motivated, but at home, because it's just me learning, trying to learn on my own, I feel less motivated.” Similarly, Tub was one who was able to identify three teachers, all PE teachers, whom he felt he had a connection with. He really enjoyed the teacher’s support and motivation for him in sports. He also shared that he learned he enjoyed badminton because of the PE teachers.

Aside from the participants being able to identify teachers who were a resource to them, they also had some suggestions for the resources. For example, Pao said the only thing he would change is “having the counselors reach out more to the students, instead of students reaching out to the counselors because I know some students in this school, they need help, but they're too afraid to reach out.” Due to the personalities of the group and the participants, the researcher assumed this was spoken in reference to the group members. Zer also had another suggestion by saying that the school does a really good job of providing resources for college and career planning; however, she chose not to seek some of those resources due to a busy schedule. She decided on this mostly to find some life balance and to cope with stress. She also disclosed that her weekends are busy as she helps her parents all weekend with their business.

In summary, participants in this domain identified resources in their school that were helpful with college and career planning. Participants were aware of the college preparatory program, AVID. Even more, they were able to identify specific educators who were able to help them improve their skills and interests. Participants were not able to acquire formal training outside of school; therefore, they relied on the school for any training. Also, participants identified the college and career coordinator and their school counselor as educators who can assist with their college and career planning. Additionally, the participants described connecting,

communicating, and bonding with their non-Hmong peers as a struggle due to differences in culture, language, and values.

Summary

This chapter provides demographic information about each participant in this study who participated in the group. There were five domains that were discussed, with several quotes and statements from the participant's journals and interviews that captured each group member's group experience.

Domain 1 focused on family with four themes and two subthemes. Participants identified family members as the main source of information for college and career planning over educators from school and school counselors. Family members valued college as a source that would provide a successful career. Cultural gender-based values such as gender roles and expectations were revealed as barriers and frustrations for some female participants.

Domain 2 was barriers with four themes. The English language was a barrier both for their parents and the participants. Some participants felt their lack of understanding of the English language impacted their academic success, comprehension, comfort, and level of comfort in communicating with non-Hmong peers. Another barrier was the cost of college tuition. Although their parents support them in going to college, it was the participant's duty to find a way to pay for their college education.

Domain 3 was the group experience with three themes. Participants learned they had similarities and qualities in common, such as being all reserved, modest, and humble. This matches the literature on how educators describe Hmong students (Lee, 2018; Lor, 2018; Um, 2003; Vang, 2005; Yeh, 2001). Generally, the participants described themselves as not comfortable in their school with non-Hmong peers. Although some felt discomfort at school, the

others wanted future group work to include other BIPOC students. Furthermore, they all had similar college goals, and all of their parents encouraged them to go to college after high school. The participants all really enjoyed the Hmong college student panel and the Hmong financial aid expert. All participants felt the group was very helpful and motivating in reference to college and career planning.

Domain 4 was post-secondary plans, which had two themes. Participants were able to reflect on and trace their career development from when they were younger to the present. Many shared how they changed their career to one that was more common. Most of the participants did not have formal training or experience in a specific career field; therefore, they struggled to choose and commit to one. Lastly, participants were confident in going to college after high school, but they were not confident in choosing a specific career.

Domain 5 was the school environment, with three themes. Participants were able to identify resources in their school that they could use or have access to. Participants were also able to identify educators in their school as resources for college and career planning. Lastly, participants described it as difficult to connect with non-Hmong peers due to differences in culture, language, and values.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The research question for this qualitative phenomenological study explored how Hmong adolescents (participants) make sense of their lived experiences at a midwest high school while receiving college and career support through group work. Six Hmong adolescents participated in small group counseling for six weeks, meeting once a week. Each group session was created under the lens of Conley's (2008) four factors of student college readiness and AMBSS (2021). The Hmong student model by Lor (2008) and the barriers mentioned by Xiong & Lam (2013) were used as focuses for each session that connected to the research. From reviewing the data, 5 domains, 16 themes, and 3 subthemes that emerged addressed the experiences of the participants. The small-group session themes were as follows: Session 1 focused on understanding identity (Malott & Paone, 2016) and exposure to small groups (Yalom, 2005) to understand self and family. Session 2 emphasized understanding the resources available at their high school (Oleka & Mitchell, 2022) using results from Xiong & Lam's (2013) study on resources. Session 3 focused on financial aid with a Hmong financial aid expert (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004; Hollie, 2016; Ngo et al., 2018). Session 4 was centered on discussing and understanding their beliefs and values about college and careers (Lor, 2008). Session 5 focused on goal planning, vision, and drive (Lee & Green, 2009: Lor, 2008) Lastly, Session 6 was a college student panel, as suggested by Hollie (2016) and Gibbons & Shoffner (2004).

The following discussion section will examine each domain and the connection with existing literature and professional organizations. The five domains discovered via interviews, journals, and group experiences were: Family, Barriers, Group Experience, Post-Secondary Plans, and School Environment.

Discussion

Domain 1: Family

In Domain 1, analysis of the data revealed that family was integral to the decision-making process for college and post-secondary planning for the participants in the group. Four themes emerged in this domain that include a component of family impacting college and post-secondary planning. The researcher will evaluate the findings from this domain below.

Domain 1 Theme 1 was Family members are a major source for post-secondary planning, and a subtheme was that participants felt they must make post-secondary decisions that impact their family. The research showed that family members are pivotal in helping Hmong adolescents with college and post-secondary options and opportunities (Surla & Poon, 2015; Tatman, 2004; Xiong & Lam, 2013; Yang, 2014). Theme 1 from Domain 1 supported this research, indicating family, which included their cousins and an adult family member, were vital to the participant's exposure to resources that determined which opportunity the participants were going to choose after high school. All participants shared that their family was the number one resource for their college and post-secondary planning. Pao relied on his mother and aunt; Meng relied on his brothers since they graduated high school; and Sheng relied on her cousins. Lastly, Mai, Tub, and Zer relied on their parents and/or older siblings. This demonstrated how family members are integral in passing down information to others in their family. Although family members may be resource providers, school counselors still need to support and provide additional resources that cover any gaps in addition to ensuring families understand the resources and are following through. It was typical that the family member shares their path or a suggested path, which is only one experience and one path. The participants choosing family members for post-secondary planning over school counselors in the building shows how significant maintaining rapport and understanding of how information is passed down from one family

member to another. Participant responses also show how school counselors need to maintain a relationship with family members for Hmong students. Tatman (2004) suggests school counselors should understand the value Hmong individuals place on the family. For example, Sheng spoke to their cousin because they felt their cousin had more experience since they already went to college. This participant chose not to talk to their school counselor since they felt this need was met by a family member. Even more, this finding supported the research by Surla & Poon (2015) and Yang (2014) in that family was the inspiration and role model in a Hmong individual's personal development and their post-secondary choice. When school counselors are working with Hmong adolescents on college and career planning, they should include and collaborate with family members that will be the main source of support from home. This domain aligns with ASCA's School Counselor Professional Standards and Competences (2019) (B-PF 6) which states that school counselors are to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of cultural, social, and environmental influences on student success and opportunities.

Although participant responses supported family members as the main source of support for the participants, the participants still experienced a lack of proper support (Endo, 2017, Her, 2014, Lee, 2002, Lee, 2006, Lor, 2018). For example, Pao acknowledged that his mom and his aunt recommended a college, but no clear path was discussed with him. Meng observed his older brothers, but no clear path was paved for him either. Sheng depended on her mom and her brothers, and their only hope was for her to go to college, but there were no expectations after. Although family was the support for the participants, support was mostly encouragement to go to college only. Family members were not able to provide detailed support for the participants. This matched Vang's (2005) outcome of Hmong parents or family members struggling to support their children to better understand the school system and system support. It appeared that the family

members suggested college, but the actual steps to get there were not provided; therefore, this is the gap that needs to be examined more.

School counselors should collaborate with Hmong parents and admissions counselors to help Hmong students understand the college application process in their building. It can start from first understanding the role of the school counselor and how a school counselor can support their student with college and career planning. This might including, teaching Hmong students and their parents how to book an appointment with their school counselor, where to find their school counselor, and showing families how they can request supports during the meeting with the school counselor, such as a cultural liaison or specific translation services. During these meetings the school counselor can share the process for acquiring college application documents such as letters of recommendation, transcripts and school profile, how to complete college applications, important dates and deadlines, standardized testing and colleges that are test optional, and how to submit documents. If students can acquire these documents themselves, or if their input is required as part of the process, they should be given resources or taught how. For example, school counselors could post a QR code that links up to a document that shows the flowchart for how to access and submit the documents. A poster or infographic are alternatives for this too. A check list that includes these main items, (also translated into multiple languages), can be given to the family and the student to ensure they have a process to follow.

Theme 2 detailed how family values impacted Hmong students' beliefs on future planning. In two separate studies, Lee (1997) and Thao (2009) found in their studies that Hmong parents valued their children attending college for financial security. Mai and Tub's reports matched this research in that both shared that going to college means being more successful financially. When Mai is able to acquire a job that pays her well, she will, in return, help her

family financially. The other participants shared this same goal as well, indicating financial security was stabilized through going to college and acquiring a career that pays well. Thao (2009) study found similar results in that parents valued college for the sole purpose of being financially stable and hoped the participants would bring knowledge, resources, and money back into the family.

Another way of showing the value of career and life readiness is when family members engage with their students in college and career planning. Lee & Green (2009) conducted a study that looked at two different achievement levels of Hmong students and how parent engagement impacted them. They found that Hmong adolescents who had more clear goals knew of their post-secondary plans since they were more defined by family members. Participant responses from this study supported Lee & Green's (2009) study in that the future path for all participants was not clear aside from parents expecting them to go to college. No career path was expected of them or how to achieve it. As theme 1 indicated, family members are crucial in the college and career decision-making of Hmong adolescents; therefore, it is important for school counselors to help educate and share with both Hmong students and their parents by providing clear, detailed post-secondary plans for their students.

Furthermore, in Theme 3, participants experienced differing cultural expectations from their parents based on their gender. Two separate research studies by Yang (2001) and Iannarelli (2004) both found that Hmong parents mostly encouraged boys to get an education while girls were encouraged to stay home and do chores. The findings from this study did not support the results from Yang (2001) and Iannarelli (2014). This study found that both boys and girls in the group were equally supported and encouraged to consider college after high school by their parents; however, only Zer, a female participant, was expected to meet the condition of finding a

college close to home. Zer's condition matches Yang's (2014) study indicating family members are a source for post-secondary planning and that Hmong women typically experience more challenges. Sheng and Zer from the group shared examples of how their parents treated them differently from their brothers. The participants were disappointed, as they felt they were asked to do more tasks or were limited to doing certain things. For example, Sheng was not allowed to drive and not allowed to go anywhere, while her brothers were able to drive without a driver's license and were able to go where they wanted. In another example, Zer was expected to know how to change her younger sibling's diaper while her brother was not. School counselors should be mindful how college and career planning may vary for Hmong adolescents across genders. Talking to Hmong students and their parents can help school counselors gain a sense of how to best support the student by understanding their goals.

School counselors should be aware of how the Hmong culture impacts college and career planning, theme 4. Participants shared that they experienced bicultural challenges with post-secondary planning. For example, Tub wanted to be an athlete in college but understood their parents would not support that decision. Tub's parents wanted him to consider another non-sport major in college. Also, Zer said that due to their parents being more traditional, this impacts the opportunities they are afforded. Zer shared that they wanted to go to a college that was farther away from home, but their parents did not allow it, especially if she was to marry her boyfriend. She would need to change her college plans to accommodate her husband's family's expectations. All participants expressed feelings they were suppressed by their parents, limiting their engagement with other opportunities and activities, like the findings of Yang (2014) who stated Hmong women typically experience contention with college and career, needing to negotiate their education and career with family members. School counselors may need to work

with Hmong adolescents to better understand their college and career goals while also learning about their parents' goals, as they may be very different. School counselors will need to offer college and career options to help Hmong adolescents feel they are not forced to choose a college or career they do not want to pursue.

When working with Hmong female adolescents, school counselors should be reminded of the cultural expectations their family may place on them. Participants Sheng and Zer shared a correlation between being obedient and being a good daughter. To be obedient, both would need to listen to their parents, do what they are instructed to do, and when they marry, they must do what their husbands tell them. These participants are trying to meet the needs of their parents, who are following more traditional values while adapting to American culture. This description aligns the studies by Lee (1997) on Hmong women's pursuit of higher education and Thao's (2017) study on Hmong female college students and the challenges they faced, such as college, gender roles, identity, marriage, and balancing two cultures, the American culture or dominant culture and the Hmong culture.

Domain 2: Barriers

Four themes related to barriers emerged from this study. The first theme is that the English language is a barrier to education. In general, participants felt their lack of understanding of the English language and vocabulary was a barrier to their academic success. This supported Lor's (2018) findings that language becomes a barrier for Hmong students in post-secondary planning, causing them to lack skills. Mai believed she lacked education skills due to language when comparing herself to non-Hmong peers. She was unable to understand certain words that are not part of her vocabulary, making it hard to understand others, and she feels incompetent to communicate with non-Hmong students. She felt embarrassed about how this was hindering her

engagement in class. Other group members, such as Meng and Tub, shared this exact concern, saying they do not understand what others are saying to them often due to not understanding some words they used. Additionally, participant Meng was concerned about being a slow reader, therefore impacting his grades and success in classes. It would be helpful for school counselors to check in with Hmong adolescents throughout the meeting or discussion for understanding to ensure the Hmong adolescents understand certain keywords. School counselors can also provide a vocabulary list of commonly used words during college and post-secondary planning.

Pao shared that since there were not many Hmong students in their school, they sought one another for comfort to just know there were other Hmong students like them. Generally, the participants wanted to be around more Hmong students. Researcher Kwan (2015) shared that some Hmong students may tease and even bully other Hmong students for using their native language. All participants in this group did not share or disclose any concerns about their use of the Hmong language or how they may be limited by the English language through teasing, insulting, or harming another Hmong student. Due to this, Kwan's (2015) research did not fit the findings of this study.

Similarly, as shared in Chapter 2, Vang (2005) found that parents struggled to communicate with the schools due to limited language. Tub validated this by saying the financial aid presenter would be able to communicate and contact her and her parents anytime due to the ability to speak the same language. She even went on to further say that "our parents can even call her and she can talk to them in Hmong so my parents can understand it as well." Hmong parents who are unable to understand English would struggle to communicate with teachers and school officials. Researcher Lee (2002) found that cultural and language barriers between the school and home caused the students to feel left out, leading them to lack belongingness to the

school and miss out on important information and opportunities. Mai, Sheng, and Tub validated that they do struggle with connecting with non-Hmong peers due to language and culture. School counselors should be aware of the English language being a barrier and the impact on social relationships with non-Hmong peers and the teacher when meeting with Hmong students if they are struggling in the class or not engaged.

In relation to English language being a barrier, it was typical of participants to share that they were lacking education skills. Some participants felt they were not prepared for college due to this. Pao shared that their identity with the Hmong language was a limitation to their educational attainment, which supported Zhou and colleagues (2009) study explaining that Hmong adolescents are bicultural and bilingual, and when they learn and experience the dominant culture and language, they start to lose sight of their own. This adds to the academic pressure and acculturation. Kwan (2015) found this in their study of microaggressions against Hmong American students, where they voiced feeling frustrated, invisible, and were treated unfairly in class by peers and the teachers. Sheng shared that, by lacking educational skills, they are behind in classes, which makes them reconsider college as an option. Lastly, Meng shared that he was not confident with his English skills and this caused him to fail a few classes due to not understanding writing in the English language. For the participants who struggled with reading and the English language, they felt this impacted their reading speed and comprehension, which makes homework more challenging to complete in a timely fashion and limits engagement in class. The participants may need reassurance that being bilingual and bicultural is not a deficit but an advantage (DePouw, 2012). When bilingual speakers are not reminded of their abilities, they may lose sight of their own language and culture (DePouw, 2012; Kwan, 2015; Lee, 2002).

This is crucial for school counselors to know, as Hmong students are often compared to white students, which is not appropriate (Collier et al., 2012; Sue et al., 1998).

The study by Yeh (2001) showed that when Asian American students sought help from their school counselor, it was due to concerns from their parents in reference to academic pressure, family, and cultural barriers. In this study, the participants did not seek support from their school counselor due to pressure from their parents. When the participants did seek their counselor, it was for academic support.

Theme 2 in Domain 2 was the cost of college being a barrier for Hmong adolescents. One of Xiong & Lam's (2013) barriers that Hmong students typically encounter in their studies is the financial aspect of college. Lee & Green (2009) shared that Hmong parents believed education was important for the financial security of their children in the future. Participant responses from this study supported both Xiong & Lam's (2013) and Lee & Green's (2009) findings that the cost of college and how to afford it were barriers for all the participants in the group. Although the participants all shared that their parents support them in going to college, their parents do not have the actual financial resources. Pao was unsure of how he was going to afford living in the dorms and tuition. Sheng shared that they are working to save money for college but also know they are not good at saving money. They also know their parents are not financially stable to help. Meng and Zer both shared how they want to apply for scholarships after the Financial Aid Session for financial support. Both Xiong & Lam (2013) and Surla & Poon (2015) suggest students be exposed to these resources, such as financial aid, more often to help increase social capital. To add to this, Hmong adolescents should be exposed to this in high school and in college, in addition to their parents, so they can both work towards the same goal. Also, both

Yang (2014) and Lee (1997) mentioned that Hmong women believe a college education would lead to financial security and independence.

Another barrier the participants shared was the Hmong culture. It was typical of participants to share that they felt the Hmong culture was a barrier to their post-secondary plans (Cerhan, 1990; Lee & Green, 2009). As mentioned before, the bicultural Hmong participants struggled to understand their identity while balancing two cultures. The participants shared that although they understand the Hmong culture, their parents do not understand the American culture (Cerhan, 1990; Lee & Green, 2009). The participants described the acculturation of their parents in two ways: traditional and modern. For example, Mai wrote in her journal:

> I feel like I am learning a lot about how Hmong culture is changing in America. I feel more push to help the Hmong community in the future. Knowledge I am taking with me today as I leave is how our Hmong community has been changing differently alongside American culture. I am feeling like the Hmong culture is fading away as we try to adapt to American culture.

This matches the acculturation level as shared by Sue et al. (1998) discussed in Chapter 2 regarding two main groups of immigrants and their level of acculturation. When an individual is more Americanized (modern), their values and style of life become harder to distinguish from their original culture. Sue et al. (1998) also explained that individuals who are less acculturated (traditional) require more support due to experiencing more challenges with acculturation, which can lead to more mental health concerns. Sue et al. (1998) explained that there are two main groups of immigrants when acculturating. Some individuals are attached to and close to their native culture, while others are more Americanized. When an individual is Americanized, their values and lifestyle are harder to distinguish from their original culture (Sue et al., 1998).

Furthermore, Sue and colleagues (1998) explained that individuals with higher levels of acculturation usually have higher self-esteem and stronger socialization connections with their families, and all of this typically leads to higher levels of psychological well-being. This matches Pao and Zer, as they both presented themselves in groups as having stronger social connections with families and the group members. Less acculturated individuals may require more support due to experiencing more challenges and mental health concerns (Sue et al., 1998). Hmong adolescents have higher levels of acculturation, while their parents experience lower levels of acculturation (Lee, 2013). Lastly, it is important for counselors to recognize the level of acculturation before recommending counseling services (Sue et al., 1998). School counselors should know that for the Hmong, acculturation is a significant challenge (Tatman, 2004). As the Hmong are adapting to the dominant culture, they are also putting in a lot of effort to retain their culture and their identity (Kim et al., 2009). This process of adapting to the dominant culture while retaining their own is a challenging aspect of being bicultural and discovering their own bicultural identity. Taking the time to understand how acculturation impacts the cultural practices of the Hmong can help professionals better understand the challenges they face.

Domain 3: Group Experience

Four themes emerged from participant narratives that related to the group experience. The first theme is that the participants noticed they all had common traits and personalities in the group. They all shared that they often exhibit common personality traits such as being shy and reserved. Hmong students are often overlooked by educators in school because they are reserved, quiet, and guarded (Lee, 2018; Lor, 2018; Um, 2003; Vang, 2005; Yeh, 2001). Meng wished they would be able to ask more questions during group and said they lacked confidence. He wrote in his journal, “I felt nervous talking about some subjects because I was uncomfortable

about my answers." After I leave this class, I should practice being more comfortable sharing my thoughts. Pao and Zer believed Hmong students are not outspoken and Sheng and Zer supported this by encouraging the other members to speak more. They also acknowledged that the other group members lacked confidence and feared the option of going to college. School counselors facilitating groups with Hmong adolescents should know that group members may be reserved and not speak as much; therefore, the school counselor or group leader will need to engage the group members more with each lesson.

Even more, a subtheme from the group was that the participants realized they all had similar college goals, which was helpful with their identity in the group. The group was meaningful and comforting for members, given they saw that they all had similar goals, familial experiences, and barriers. This matched the results Nguyen (2013) shared on Hmong pride and feeling a sense of belongingness to one another while also feeling marginalized and isolated. This supports Lee's (2002) study that Hmong students often feel marginalized and isolated in schools. Even more, the Hmong college panel speakers and the Financial Aid expert were Hmong and this experience helped support their post-secondary goals. Group members described seeing the Hmong college panel members as similar to their siblings. One group member shared a sense of comfort knowing their parents are able to connect with them too, avoiding the barrier of language. Some of the college panel members shared that they felt they were the older siblings of the participants in the group; therefore, they felt obligated to encourage and lead the participants towards a future with education. The participants felt a kinship and familial connection, even though they were not related. This is an example of the collective values in the Hmong culture. One college panel member shared that they were the only female child in her family who went to college and how lonely her college path was. This resonated with one group

participant, as they were also experiencing similar challenges as a Hmong female who wants to pursue college. Even more, another college panel member shared his experience of hosting a Hmong male awareness of the suppression of Hmong women in the Hmong community. The Hmong male group participants did not mention this in their journals and interviews; however, one female group participant smiled and was on the edge of her seat when learning of this. She also inquired about this and wrote of her excitement in the journal. Meng wrote in his journal, "I felt safe and comfortable and was nervous about asking questions. After this, I will try to apply for more scholarships." Mai learned about the jobs the college panel members spoke of and wrote in her journal, "Part-time jobs are most of the time very flexible. The change from college to high school is very big. Learning to put myself out there for the community." Zer shared in her journal the takeaway messages the college panel members shared: "Take your time when deciding your career choices. Make your own choices, even when people don't agree. Take your time; don't rush. You are responsible for your own time management." This experience of a panel member matching that of a group participant matches the recommendations by Hollie (2016) and Gibbons & Shoffner (2014) on validating and building a bridge to connect students with resources to build awareness of their identity and using role models that match the participant group for support.

The second theme was that participants shared their suggestions for group formulation and creation for future group work purposes. These include an affinity group for other students of color, allowing and welcoming other students of color to join this group, and led by a student group leader. Zer shared that exposing Hmong students to other non-Hmong students could help with identity development since there are other Asian students and other non-Hmong students who respect and acknowledge them at school. Pao supported this as he believed the Hmong

group participants would feel increased connection, rapport, and trust in other non-Hmong peers in the school. Connection, trust, and rapport all support the findings from Hayes' (2001) research on groups offering a safe place where group members are able to receive attention and feedback and allow participants to process information between one another. Relative to group planning for the future, Sheng suggested that the group meet more frequently because she felt she could not recall in detail what happened in the previous session. By meeting more frequently, she felt other members, including herself, would remember more of what was discussed in the group.

Group work is a need, and the participants will most likely anticipate and enjoy it. School counselors should plan to create groups each year when applicable. The last theme in this domain was that all group members believed the group sessions were helpful. In general, the participants in the shared group did encourage them to consider college as a post-secondary option; however, the sessions were not enough to help the group members make concrete decisions about their career plans, specifically careers. Only three group members were able to identify specific career paths (Cosmetology, Lawyer, and Computer Science) while the other group members were not sure. For example, Mai wrote in her journal, "As I leave group today I think I'll feel a bit nervous because from what we talked about in group could make me change my mind on what I want to do or become." Although nervous, Mai and the other participants became aware of the action steps to acquire their career, college, and community goals through suggestions from other group members within six months to one year and then five years. Okocha (2008) found similar results for Hmong college students, where 68% of the participants had trouble choosing a career. In the following session, Mai wrote in her journal, "Knowledge or skills I'll be taking with me are planning skills and actions for college and career. I learned that our community experiences things as we go. I am feeling a lot better about how I should prep for my college and career."

These group members may need more exposure to their social capital (Malott et al., 2019; Roderick et al., 2009; Simon et al., 2022; Surla & Poon, 2015). By helping students be more aware of their network in their school, such as understanding how a school counselor is someone who can provide resources for college and career planning, this can help students consult with a network before making decisions. In addition, researchers Simon et al. (2022) implemented in their six-week summer bridge program the practice of internalizing building relationships with others through sharing meaningful family stories, personal narratives of experiences, and strategies for developing skills significant in college. Like this group, a focus on internalizing building relationships as a skill for college was not implemented and should be considered for future group planning.

Similarly, Simon et al. (2022) focused their program primarily on building connections with others, which helped the participants learn to connect with one another to build trust, which led to increased social capital. Although there was a lesson on social capital during week 2, this may need to be extended for future groups. Furthermore, a collaborative working relationship with the participants' school counselors is another way to support this development.

School counselors should be reminded of how Hmong adolescent group members will perceive the group leader. The group experience for the group leader/researcher matched Ngo et al. (2018) findings that when a professional educator has a natural connection (i.e., race, ethnicity, language, cultural practices, and community) with the students, this helps develop rapport and trust with group members. The group leader in this study was Hmong, and since the Hmong culture is collective, the cultural connection the group leader had with the participants was vital to maintaining a professional relationship with the group members.

Domain 4: Post-Secondary Plans

The first theme in this domain was the career development of the participants. To better grasp Hmong adolescents' career development and understand their bicultural development, school counselors should inquire and listen to how they reflect on their career development. All participants shared their career development from elementary to high school and how it has changed as they grew older. Some participants recalled proclaiming a variety of careers when they were younger. However, as they have matured, they have begun to change their career aspirations. Some changed their careers based on interests and skills learned from school. Given that Hmong students are 2nd generation Hmong students who are more acculturated than their parents, which matches Asian Americans who are more acculturated, the participants chose careers that were less typical and representative of Asian Americans (Fouad & Kantemeneni, 2013). For example, Tub described himself as having a big imagination and wanting to be a doctor and astronaut when he was younger, but now he is unsure of what he wants to be, especially since his parents will not support him going to college for a sport as they want a career that is secure and stable financially (Lee & Green, 2009; Surla & Poon, 2015). Tub also realized he had no formal training and no coach, and their parents did not support them. He noticed that his peers in gym class had greater skills than him. Another example is Mai's mom wanting her to choose computer science as a career; however, she said she does not want to sit behind a computer all day and she does not like technology. She would prefer to do something more with her hands. She even spoke of wanting to be a musician but was limited in training besides from her music teacher at school. Even more, Pao spoke of evolving from wanting to work with animals to being an artist, volleyball player, and singer/songwriter when he was younger, but as he grew older, he decided to consider the engineering and robotics career paths. He described his earlier career aspirations as more sporadic and chosen due to interest, while the ones he is

considering now as a senior in high school are more general and realistic career paths. All participants did not disclose of any role models or mentors for the careers they were interested in. This did not support the findings from Fouad & Kantemeneni (2013) in which participants typically identified role models who were the same race as their own. Perhaps this is due to a lack of social capital and career programs targeted at Hmong youth for career development and limited Hmong educators and Hmong professionals who are actively promoting their careers to Hmong youth.

Level of confidence about post-secondary planning was the second theme that emerged. Similar to Hayes' (2001) study on group counseling to help improve student's grades, student perceptions of school, and increase career information, it was found that increasing college and career information available to students created more of a positive climate to explore options; however, level of confidence in choosing a career was not a factor measured. The purpose of the group was not to declare a path or career but to understand that there are options if they choose to go to college. As mentioned earlier, even though the participants felt the group was helpful with their post-secondary planning, only some of the participants were able to confidently proclaim a future career path. This was not a group goal, as the goal was to be exposed to resources that would help students better understand their college and career plans. Participants were able to reflect and trace their career development from elementary school to high school, but they were also able to project into the future about their career goals. The participants knew college and work as the main paths based on the discussion in group. It was typical of participants to share they wanted to go to college but did not know what they would major in. Tub reflected about the Hmong college panel, saying he felt a sense of relief knowing even college graduates can change their career years after college, while another participant

encouraged others to take their time to make a career choice and take risks. Only three participants expressed the most confidence in choosing a major in college. Zer was confident in proclaiming their major of pursuing law, Pao was going to pursue engineering for college, and Sheng wants to go to college but is not aware of which one. She is considering a career in cosmetology at a college.

Domain 5: School Environment

Participants commonly shared how the school environment plays a role in exposure to opportunities and educators who are important to them. The first theme is that participants were aware of the resources in their school. Oleka and Mitchelle (2022) emphasized that the school counselors were the resource; therefore, they can provide resources and opportunities for students with academic, college, and post-secondary planning. Some participants in this study shared that they did not know their school counselor; therefore, they did not meet regularly to better understand the support a school counselor can offer. Hmong students felt overlooked and disconnected and would appreciate their school counselor to initiate meetings. In addition, all participants acknowledged that classes and specific individuals (i.e., college counselors and non-core subject teachers) are there to help with exploring options. In general, participants knew college representatives visit the school and all shared that they knew the school offers resources to prepare them for college, such as college application support and the college and career coordinator. For example, Zer spoke of the AVID program but was unable to join due to schedule constraints. Participant Sheng acknowledged her counselor, who supported her in remaining on track to graduate. Lastly, Mai and Tub shared that they both acknowledge their teachers as individuals who can support them, specifically Mai with piano support and Tub with encouragement about his skills in playing sports. It was typical of participants to know there are

school counselors available; however, none shared maintaining regular and consistent contact with their school counselor about their overall needs, such as college, career, academic, social, and personal needs. Most of the participants were able to identify specific teachers or other educators who could support their post-secondary planning. Through school climate surveys, school counselors can assess students after each grading period to gauge student connectedness and belongingness. School counselors can create their own or use established ones such as Sown to Grow, the Minnesota State Survey from the Minnesota Department of Education, and Panorama.

Although the participants struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers, they were able to identify educators who could support them who were white. This did not match the findings by DePouw (2012) in that teachers were offering less time to connect and build a relationship with Hmong students, which made it hard for the Hmong students to succeed. Mai was one who maintained a relationship with her music teacher and said that at home, she lacked support for music, but when she was in class with her music teacher, she felt encouraged and inspired. Meng also really enjoyed his PE teachers because they taught him how to play sports. Also, Sheng, when she finally met with her school counselor, who is white, stated she was relieved as he was able to help her find a way to graduate on time.

The last theme from this domain was that the participants struggled to connect with non-Hmong students in school. These feelings matched those of participants in a study by Lee (2002) who reported that Hmong American students experienced isolation and lacked belongingness with other students in the building. All the participants acknowledged that the Hmong population in the building is low. This is a barrier to social connections and the level of comfort in the building. Participants felt that their personality of being reserved may be misunderstood by their

peers as a fear of others. Pao in particular believed Hmong students are also afraid of being who they are and fear judgment from others. During the group meetings, Zer validated Pao by saying they are scared to connect with others at school. They are scared and feel embarrassed to talk to other classmates who are not Hmong. Zer acknowledged Hmong students do not typically engage in school activities; therefore, those Hmong students who are together gather at the gas station instead or go home after school. Zer was one who often went home to help with babysitting her younger siblings or the family's business. In a study by Yang (2014) on 1.5 generation Hmong American women, it was found that extracurricular programs can improve their learning of options and opportunities when it comes to career development. This is helpful for school counselors to target Hmong students if they express a lack of extracurriculars to join. Also, in a study by Bhat & Stevens (2021), it was suggested that all high schools host extracurricular fairs and encourage all students to attend. School counselors can support this by hosting a fair during the most productive class period or time of day that includes representatives who are culturally diverse and then following up with certain students in small group discussions (Bhat & Stevens, 2021).

In summation, the research from this study supports what was known in the limited research about college and career planning and how family members are highly influential to Hmong adolescents (Surla & Poon, 2015; Tatman, 2004; Xiong & Lam, 2013; Yang, 2014). Extended family members are information providers who pass down information. School counselors need to be aware of how vital family members are to the decision-making of Hmong adolescents. School counselors should include family members when supporting Hmong adolescents with college and career planning to cover the gaps in family members knowledge (Endo, 2017, Her, 2014, Lee, 2002, Lee, 2006, Lor, 2018). The participants' families value

college as a gateway to a secure financial future (Lee, 1997; Thao, 2009). Unlike the findings by Yang (2001) and Iannarelli (2014) where Hmong boys were encouraged to pursue their education while Hmong girls were not, this study found that both boys and girls were equally supported to consider college after high school, with the exception that Hmong girls were limited in the distance of their college to their home.

This study found four main themes that created barriers to college and career planning. The English language was a barrier to academic success and this impacted their preparedness and success in college (Lor, 2018). The language barrier also made the participants feel uncomfortable in school. The language barrier was limiting for the parents of the participants. The cost of college was also a barrier, as the participants knew their parents were unable to support them with tuition; therefore, they were curious and worried about how they were going to afford college. The participants were bicultural, and their level of acculturation varied. Those who put a lot of effort into maintaining the Hmong culture experienced more acculturation challenges (Tatman, 2004).

The participants learned they had many things in common, including their humble and modest personalities and similar college goals. The participants all thoroughly enjoyed the group as they learned about college and careers. Lastly, reflecting on their experience in the group, they suggested changes for future groups.

The participants were able to reflect about how their career choices have changed and evolved from when they were younger to high school. Although the group was helpful in preparing them for college, each participant's confidence in a specific career was low. Only three participants described themselves with the most confidence with choosing a major in college.

Many of the participants were aware of the resources available to them in their school. Some participants in this study shared that they did not know their school counselor. Based on their demure personalities, they would appreciate their school counselor initiating a meeting. The participants were all able to identify other educators who they felt were able to support them. Lastly, the participants shared that they struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers due to differences in language, culture, and fear of being judged.

Lens

Conley (2008)'s four factors of college readiness and AMBSS (2021) served as a lens for this study. In combination, the group work sessions were created using both as a foundation to ensure the sessions promoted college readiness and that students were encouraged to demonstrate certain mindsets and behaviors for college, career, and life-readiness.

Conley's (2008) first factor, Cognitive Strategies, emphasizes how students analyze, reason, interpret information, and problem solve. This factor was paired with AMBSS standards (2021) B-LS1, B-LS 2, and B-LS 9. Infused together, these standards promote that school counselors help students with learning strategies that focus on critical thinking skills, use creative approaches to problem solve, and decision-making through evidence gathering and recognizing personal biases. For example, during session 4, group members completed a goal planning worksheet and set three different goals: college, career, and community. Group members identified a goal and then wrote action steps to acquire each individually. Then group members shared their goals worksheet with two other group members. Upon receiving another group member's worksheet, members were instructed to review the goal and then add actions steps to help assist their group member's goal-setting process. In total, each group member identified three goals, wrote actions steps for each goal, and then wrote additional actions steps to help

other group member toward their goals. Through this process, group members analyzed and interpreted information from one another through critically thinking and using creative approaches to problem solve. During the group share, group members recognized their personal biases in what they would prefer to do in addition to how much they agree to other's suggestions. They also gained insight into any gaps or blind spots from the other group members of which they may have overlooked or not considered. Mai wrote, "Knowledge or skills I'll be taking with me are planning skills/action for college and career. I am feeling a lot better about how I should prep for my college and career." Mai felt better prepared on how to acquire her goals after reading what other group members wrote. Zer wrote,

> I learned that I have a lot of goals that I think of everyday. I also learned that I write more and is more clear about my career college life than others. I feel good leaving the group today because I know have my goals written down. As I leave today, I'll be thinking more about what type of actions steps I can take next year in order to reach my goals for my future.

Zer expressed in group how helpful this activity was and how supported she felt when others gave her suggestions.

For Conley's (2008) second factor, which is understanding content knowledge, this aligned with AMBSS M1, M2, and B-LS 1. Combined, these standards emphasizes that students believe in the development of the whole self, respect for self and others, and using critical thinking skills to make informed decisions. Conley (2008) refers to content knowledge as course subjects, however for this study, content knowledge was adapted to match this group format when learning about being bicultural, financial aid, and general college readiness? information. For example, session 1 allowed students to complete their identity shield. Group members were

able to understand how others perceived them and how they perceive themselves. Zer wrote about Hmong identity in her journal, “I learned that a lot of people see us as quiet & timid. I feel comfortable enough to share some personal things because we’re all Hmong. Leaving this room, I’ll take what others had share & try to understand them.” Zer was very outspoken, therefore even though the group members all shared this, she knew she didn’t want to be another overlooked Hmong student. She tried to participate in class whenever possible. Sheng wrote, “I learn that we all felt the same way and there’s no differences. I feel I can connect with them more in the future. The knowledge I’m taking with me is probably expressing our Hmong people of how we’re seen or known by.” Sheng and Zer both explored their identities and learned what they had in common as Hmong adolescents. Even more, sessions 3 and 6, the financial aid presenter and the Hmong college student panel, these sessions had the most educational content as presenters shared information to help increase group member knowledge of financial aid and college going process? Group members shared that these two sessions were helpful as they provided resources in addition relating to the presenters since they were Hmong. Meng wrote, “I learned a lot about colleges and financial support. I felt comfortable. When I leave this room, I am more knowledgeable and college and financial support.” Meng was hesitant about college this session helped him be more knowledgeable.

Conley’s (2008) third factor, academic behaviors, focuses on student self-control and self-management of time, study skills, and awareness of one’s abilities. This aligned with several AMBSS, B-LS 3, B-LS 4, B-SMS 1, B-SMS 2, M5 and M6. In combination, Conley (2008) and these standards suggest that the school counselor helps the student with time management, self-motivation and self-direction, belief in achievement, and being a lifelong learner. Sessions 1, 4,

and 5 helped group members focus on academic behaviors such as being aware of their own identity and their academic skills. For example, Meng wrote after session 4,

> I learned that people and me has found a career they're go for and that we have differences. I felt nervous talking about some subjects because I was uncomfortable about my answers. After I leave this class, I should practice being more comfortable sharing my thoughts.

Meng was supported in group and motivated to speak more in classes which he learned is a skill he needs in college to advocate for himself. Tub wrote, "Take your time when deciding your career choices. Make your own choices even when people don't agree. Take your time don't rush. You are responsible for your own time management." Tub expressed this message in group during sessions 5 and 6. He was more in control of his decisions when given time to make decisions and not feel rushed by others. Knowing his own set of skills, he wanted to pursue a fitting career.

Lastly, Conley's (2008) fourth factor, contextual skills and knowledge, describes how a student applies and adjusts to college. This aligns with AMBSS B-LS 3, B-LS 4, B-SMS 1, M-SMS 2, M5 and M6. Together, these standards describe how a student manages their time and study skills, how they are responsible for their learning, and how they use their abilities to achieve high quality results. One example is when participants discussed time management, vision, and goal setting during session 5. Participants shared reflections of how their career developed from childhood to the present was result of their understanding of self-direction, goal-setting, and what factors influenced them to change. Family values influenced their self-motivation, self-direction, and college and career planning, including which path to choose. Another example, during session 2 was when participants discussed the value in resources that

are available to them such as courses, programs, college and career coordinator, school counselors, and educators. To demonstrate, Zer said, “Our school has a lot of colleges coming to visit during the beginning of the years- in the year…. they also have AVID, which is a path that we can take.” Also, participants discussed their ownership to their learning by sharing how they set academic goals and partner share. All participants wanted to go to college and they were supported by their parents.

In summation, this study used two lenses, Conley (2008)’s four factors of college readiness and ASCA’s Mindset and Behaviors (2021) for Student Success (AMBSS). In combination, the group work session foundations were rooted in creating a college readiness mindset in addition to encouraging behaviors that lead students to success in college, career, and life readiness.

Recommendations

Recommendations for supporting Hmong adolescents through group work with college and career planning will be discussed here. When school counselors implement a program or host events for Hmong students and families, the target audience should be both the parents and the students, as the family is the primary source of support for all issues in a Hmong family (Bliatout, 1980; Tatman, 2004; Thao, 2009; Yang, 2014). A few times, the participants shared that their parents did not understand the school system, as was highlighted in research from Lee & Green (2009). For example, no parent of the participants in this study recommended their student to seek their school counselors for college and career support. To better understand this relationship, school counselors could survey Hmong adolescent students and their parents using the help of a Hmong liaison, if available, and see Hmong parents understanding of school counselors.

Although college can be a gateway to financial stability, security, and mobility (Surla & Poon, 2015; Lee & Green, 2009; Lee, 1997; Yang, 2014), more work needs to be done to further the development of career planning for Hmong adolescents. In this study, Mai, Meng, and Tub were not aware of career paths but were confident about going to college. The group work helped the participants feel more confident in choosing college after high school which helps feed into a career path. Researchers Lee & Green (2009) suggested there should be more career planning support for Hmong adolescents, as they found in their study that Hmong parents were unable to properly support their children as they got older due to a lack of resources. Yang (2014) found that participants in their study on the career development of Hmong American women typically lacked vocational role models, career expectations, and support for their career exploration. Hansen (2013) suggested exploring interests, skills, and abilities along within taking a deeper look at how nurture shapes the development of interests for individuals. This study helped demonstrate that college and career development should be separated into two topics instead of one. Also, this study confirmed that group work helped the Hmong adolescents with building confidence in going to college, however they were not confident about choosing a career path.

Another recommendation is that school counselors must decide how to best support Hmong students planning for college. For example, school counselors can adapt their events and create group sessions for Hmong students and their parents that further development in college planning, knowledge, and skills for Hmong adolescents. School counselors can create a series of information sessions and invite Hmong students and their families to attend. A series may help reduce overwhelming and overloading them with college information. These sessions can be created in a collaboration between college representatives and school counselors, especially

Hmong college representatives and Hmong school counselors. Hmong college counselors or college representatives from local institutions can be invited to present to share their expertise and how they can help support. Each event or session should have a bilingual Hmong educator or liaison and a college admissions representative to disseminate program information and opportunities. Having Hmong presenters who can speak in both Hmong and English and understand Hmong culture would be advantageous as the participants in this study really felt they connected to the Hmong presenters. This recommendation can be adapted to fit the needs of other BIPOC students as determined by the school counseling team based off the needs of their students.

Even more, career development takes time and it is a lifelong process starting at a young age (Super, 1990). Career support should start from kindergarten and progress throughout a students' academic career (ASCA, 2021; Blackhurst et al., 2003; Knight, 2015; Novakovic et al., 2021; Ockerman et al., 2023). The American School Counseling Association' Mindset and Behaviors for Student Success (2021) is a K-12 standard for college, career and life-readiness. Although the literature supports school counselors supporting students during younger grade levels with college and career, the applicability of the career standards may be challenging as some school districts do not have elementary school counselors due to funding or shortages, high school counselor to student ratios, or school counselors lacking preparation in school counseling programs to competently engage students with college and career readiness activities (Ockerman et al., 2023). As an outcome, this impacts students preparedness for college and career during those crucial early years. In a study by Blackhurst et al. (2003), they found that elementary students lacked awareness of noncollege postsecondary options and that students were unable to apply and connect how college preparation impacts career choice. In another study, Novakovic et

al. (2021) found in their study surveying school counselors that although they understood career counseling for students is important, many did not feel prepared to help their students with college and career readiness. Specifically for this study, due to Hmong student's intersectional identities,being first-generation college students, level of acculturation, their lack of social capital and exposure, or their family's social economic status, it is important for school counselors to target Hmong students and their parents/guardians/caregivers early and with priority.

Continuing on, another suggestion to build confidence in career choice for Hmong students is for school counselors could host informational or group sessions for Hmong students and their parents that highlight specific paths. For example, school counselors can share information on post-secondary options, being sure to highlight comprehensive options such as colleges and Universities, tech/trade program, apprenticeships, military, gap year, and employment. Even more important, school counselors should connect with both students and parents through providing a comprehensive career development from middle school to high school. Also, the sessions can include career-specific tasks such as completing a career interest profile, a personality indicator, a skills assessment, and values and beliefs assessment. Even more, during course registration, school counselors can map classes offered to various careers. School counselors can highlight specific careers and how their courses can prepare them for it. In this study, some participants did not like the careers suggested by their parents. School counselors need to ensure the career choice is a collaborate effort between both parents and student to help them feel better supported with their career plans instead of feeling pressured to pursue a career they have no interest in.

Relative to career development, Grier-Reed et al. (2012) proposed a career counseling approach with Asian American college students, suggesting constructivism integrated with multicultural and career competencies such as collectivism and family influences. Connected to this, when running career counseling groups, school counselors can infuse creating a career genogram, exploring student values, and student career identity development (Grier-Reed et al., 2012). When school counselors host psychoeducational, focus, or affinity groups, this topic of constructing career development through exploring values and creating career genograms helps with student's identity development. These activities could explore Hmong cultural values about how generations of family values impact their identity and career development. This may help students discover career influences and sociological factors impacting career decision-making. For example, in a study by Okocha (2008) on the career development concerns of college students from African and Hmong families, 37.5% of the sample identified that family responsibilities influenced their career choice, and 68.75% of the respondents indicated difficulty narrowing their career interests to a specific career. In Yeh's (2001) study on Asian American perceptions of school counselors, he found that 90.9% of the pressure students identified was a mix of family and cultural barriers. These studies exemplify the incredible influence that family members have on career choice for Hmong adolescents.

Something else to consider is for school counselors to consider hosting a summer program that targets Hmong students. For example, Simon et al. (2022) hosted a summer bridge program to help develop social and cultural capital. Throughout the summer experience, participants met with career mentors, learned to live together on a college campus, and internalized the importance of building social capital through norming. There are other

adolescent summer bridge programs available. Some of these are: TRIO, College Possible, and Genesys Works.

Another recommendation is to be mindful of the relationships among Hmong students. When finding Hmong participants for a small group in a small high school, there is a chance the members can be related. It is suggested that there be a pre-screening for group members to see if any are related and if the related members agree to be in the group together. For this research, it was not until the third session that the researcher overheard one participant say that another group member was their sibling. This midwest high school has a small population of Hmong students. The pair, who are siblings, spoke independently from one another as if they were not related; there were no conflicts about what they each shared, and they each had independent career goals; therefore, this did not cause any issues in group dynamics. Future researchers should also consider another high school that has a higher Hmong student population.

Additionally, the group leader should be prepared to adapt to any changes that come up unexpectedly. The morning of a session, there was a gun threat at the school. The researcher emailed and texted the Hmong college panel members and told them there would be some police presence at the school due to the incident. When the group started, it was pivotal to check in with the participants and the panel members before moving on to start the sessions.

To add, another recommendation is for the group leader to be aware of the participants' prior knowledge of the topic that will be discussed in the group along with knowing the intergenerational and regional changes that occur in the Hmong community due to acculturation. One of Lor (2008)'s suggestion is to be actively aware of the changes in the Hmong community and to pass on the message of college as an option to others. Although this study did not use an acculturation scale, it would be helpful prior to selecting members for group to help identify the

acculturation level each participant. As mentioned in Chapter 1, individuals with higher levels of acculturation usually have higher self-esteem and social connections which lead to higher levels of psychological well-being and individuals who are less acculturated may need more support (Sue et al., 1998).

School counselors working with Hmong students need to understand cultural competency and understand the level of acculturation of the participants. Zhou & Siu (2009) suggested that counselors first explore common difficulties with parents, such as the cultural differences between the student and parents, seek help from older generations in the community, and adopt a more direct approach with parents, which Tatman (2004) suggested. School counselors should also provide solution-oriented support rather than an approach that relies on insight, interpretation, and growth over time. Even more, all communication within the family must be given to the eldest male in the family or a relative (Tatman, 2004). Counselors should also promote a bicultural identity for all Hmong students (Tatman, 2004). Also, the school counselor must maintain professionalism, as any actions or immature responses are seen as unprofessional (Tatman, 2004). When school counselors are working with Hmong students, it is suggested that school counselors are reminded of the changes that can take place in the Hmong community. For example, Mai shared, “I learned that our community experiences things as we go.” School counselors and teachers should be aware of how quickly the Hmong are acculturating. They should utilize school liaisons and cultural specialists to gauge how acculturated some Hmong students and families are. Even more, allow the student to discuss where they are and where they see their parents with regard to acculturation. Research on Hmong education and acculturation level is limited, however scales and models exist. In a study by Xiong et al. (2018) that examined Hmong American’s acculturation and cultural identity on attitudes towards seeking professional

mental health care that used an acculturation scale called the Hmong General Cultural and Behavior Attitudes (HGCBA) scale. This scale is a modified version of the Hmong Acculturation Scale originally developed by Susan Bosher (1997) (Xiong et al., 2018). This scale measures language use, social contact, behavior, attitudes, and values. Mentioned earlier in chapter 1, Garcia et al. (2020) proposed the Acculturation Model (IAM) to measure Hmong parents and their acculturation level. Lastly, another scale that measures Asian Americans is the Asian American Multidimensional Acculturation Scale (AAMAS) by Chung et al. (2004) which assesses the cultural dimensions of Asian American immigrants.

Equally important, school counselors should assess group member's current knowledge of the topics for group and what they anticipate. For example, there were certain words the participants did not know. The Hmong College panel group and the Financial Aid group sessions had the most vocabulary due to the nature of those fields. Also, the group members wanted to better understand how college costs vary, needed to be taught different terms financial aid experts use, and needed to grasp their current understanding of the financial aid process prior to meeting the financial aid expert. Although the financial aid expert was Hmong and was able to explain the process, the information presented may have been too much, causing information overload. A suggestion is to spend a session or allocate time to debrief after the session. All group members were given a page of questions they could ask. Only one group member asked questions, while the others listened. Instead of providing the group members with a list of questions, during the previous session, the group leader should have asked the group members to write down questions. Even more, the participants could connect with parents or caregivers and inquire about any questions they have. This allows the family to discuss about the topic before coming to group. Another example that meets Conley's (2008) factor four, Contextual Skills and

Knowledge, specifically how a student applies and adjusts to college, could be a six-week-long group in itself, as there are a lot of new vocabulary and terms that students must know while applying to college. This will entail using school counselors as a resource, as suggested by Oleka & Mitchell (2022). Making sure caregivers, families, and students are aware of the purpose of school counselors as a bridge for information and to narrow or close the social capital gap (Roderick et al., 2009). Lastly, from the researcher's counseling experience at the high school, explaining the differences between the career paths, testing, application types, and deadline types can reduce any gaps in awareness of college and career options and opportunities and help students better understand their career development.

Relative to student's barrier of the English language, if the Hmong student is an EL student, school counselors can work with the EL teacher to help with vocabulary and reading ability. This can help highlight the benefits of an EL program and the impact on language comprehension and development.

School counselors need to remind Hmong parents and adolescents that seeking mental health support is a value. Counseling is to help them become more independent. Any counseling is not to hurt or change their identity and culture, but more to enhance and help students become more independent (Cerhan, 1990). Yeh (2001) studied the school counselor experience working with Asian American students and suggested that since school counselors are a part of the education system in a building, they are often the only professionals that offer college, career, and social/personal support. Yeh (2001) also noted that Asian American students may not initially seek support or show comfort by asking for help. This was evident in this study in that the participants did not seek help from the school counselors at first and sought family members first. It would be important for professional school counselors to make the first move and reach

out frequently to this population. Xiong & Lam (2013) also found that Hmong students did not seek school counselors for support.

In addition, it is recommended that school counselors and educators examine students involvement within their school. Zer shared that her Hmong peers were spending time at the gas station after school when they could be involved extracurricular activities. It was shared in group by the participants that there was no affinity or culture-based groups for Hmong students at the high school. This finding may means there is opportunity gap where some Hmong students are not participating in co-curricular activities at the same level as their White peers. In their role school counselors can identify and bring awareness to individuals who are not participating in co-curricular activities. Then, they can help explore reasons for not participating in addition to examining if there are any barriers such as cost, transportation, and time that may prohibit a student to be involved. In addition, school counselors can meet and help students learn more about their interests and connect them with both curricular and co-curricular opportunities. Also, Lor (2008)'s The Hmong Student Model encourages for Hmong students to consider co-curricular opportunities as this helps with engagement with others and their college campus. Moreover, Yang (2014) shared that extracurriculars help improve learning. Even though there are options being offered to students such as Zer knowing AVID was an option, it was overlooked. School counselors and building leaders can host co-curricular fairs to help present students with options and be exposed to possible new interests (Bhat & Stevens, 2021).

Lastly, engagement from adolescents during an interview may be challenging for researchers when trying to acquire detailed and rich information to help understand the essence of their experience. Researchers need to be mindful of the power imbalance between adults and youth (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Since children are often taught to listen, respect, and to obey

adults, during the interviews, youth may not be able to respond as naturally (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Culturally, this was present with the participants in this study. There are a few suggestions that researchers can consider. Bassett et al. (2008) recommends researchers to acquire prior information about each group participant by using a survey. This helps with creating questions that are more applicable. Also, asking interview questions where the researcher is able to self-disclose right at the beginning of the interview helps with building comfort right away to sustaining longer in the interview (Bassett et al., 2008). Moustakas (1994) suggests starting with a social conversation or even a short activity to help create an atmosphere that is relaxing and trusting. Even more, asking the teen's parents' questions about their student can help calm and put the adolescent at ease during the interview (Bassett et al., 2008). Also, a group interview is another suggestion as students can rely on one another for responding and the group facilitation may elicit greater depth in participant responses (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Lastly, the researcher had open-ended questions with follow-up questions. To sustain a longer and more in-depth interview, it may be helpful to have several follow-up questions that asks the participant.

Enhancement and Additions of the Group Lesson Plans

There are some enhancements to the group counseling sessions implemented in this study that future school counselors should consider when planning group sessions with Hmong adolescents on college and career planning. These recommendations are based on the consideration of having more time, more than six sessions, and a concentration on college and other paths. Session #1 on the Introduction to Group and Family, namely the identity shield, could be repeated during the last session to see growth and development after the sessions. This could allow the participants to reflect on themselves and how they have changed throughout the

group, specifically with their awareness of their college and career goals and their identity. Nguyen (2013) shared that Hmong adolescent's identities are socially constructed through peer groups. Also, group members can discuss gender differences in reference to identity and how this impacts their college and career discovery. For example, Thao (2017) found that as Hmong women went to college, they often started to question their identity roles as Hmong women. Early exposure and conversations on this may help with their identity development.

Session #2 on the Support Network can extend to the participants meeting with a resource they identify with, such as their school counselor or college counselor, and then presenting their experience to the group members. The members can continue this meeting once a month, mentor and mentee, to build a relationship. This enhances the suggestions by Oleka & Mitchell (2022) for increasing student awareness and their understanding of how to utilize their resources. Even more, Roderick et al. (2009) suggested that bridging the information and social capital gap will help increase student's understanding of their resources, especially with low-income and minority student groups. Relatively, this is to help students understand who they can seek when understanding how to afford college.

Session #3 on financial aid can be enhanced by pairing it with a session on scholarships. In Simon et al.'s (2022) study, they included a summer session on how to identify and secure scholarships. This helped students gain a sense of confidence in being able to afford college. A goal of the session could be for participants to complete a scholarship application in addition to practicing essay-writing skills. This matches Conley's (2008) factor of content writing in preparation for college. The group leader can also invite an educator who specializes in writing, or even an English teacher who teaches writing, to share helpful writing strategies. Even more, the group leader can include a college representative who is a reader of applications to share

what they speculatively look for in effective and persuasive essays. For a more individualized approach, the financial aid session can also be an individual session where the financial aid expert works on an individualized plan with each group member given their situation. This can be a roadmap tailored to their situation with timelines.

Session #4 on Understanding Beliefs in College and Career and Session #5 on Vision and Drive can be combined due to how beliefs drive decision-making. Instead of a sole focus on college, the session can be inclusive of exploring all the different post-secondary paths and highlighting each. This could include employment, military, apprenticeship, and gap year options. Even more, a session devoted to distinguishing two-year colleges from four-year colleges will help students discover the benefits of a two-year college and how it may fit certain career aspirations. If the sessions are to exceed six, additional sessions can include college application timelines starting in middle school, career development from middle school to high school, and scholarships, specifically how to write effective essay responses.

Lastly, session #6 can be extended by pairing the group members with a college panel member to form a mentor/mentee relationship to aid in preparing and creating college and career goals. In Simon et al.'s (2022) summer program, the participants had a student mentor, which aided in supporting student's college and career goals in addition to increasing their network of individuals who had similar college and career goals and barriers as them. Through programs with a mentoring component, students were able to better understand their identity, specifically their bicultural identity, career opportunities, volunteer work, and educational goals (Yang, 2014).

Limitations

There are several limitations that will be discussed here. This is a phenomenological research study; therefore, these results are to help develop constructs in the research community to deepen the research on Hmong adolescents, their experiences with group work, and post-career planning.

Participant responses from this study showed that family members were the major source of support for the participants; however, this study did not measure what kind of support was provided by those family members, the frequency, or the extent to which family members support their students. It was evident that family members had college and career conversations and parents shared their expectations, but there were no actions or discussions on college visits, hiring private college counselors, or essay support. A study that interviews Hmong parents and seeks to understand their expectations for their students is suggested to better understand the experiences of parents and family members, as they are the major source of support for college and post-secondary planning.

Unfortunately, none of lessons for this group did not cover the college application steps and how to adjust to college, as well as scholarship and financial aid application completion. The college application process is lengthy and was not discussed in detail in this group. Given their age and time within their college application process, the financial aid application and scholarship process timeline would only align with two participants. The timing of the group would need to start in the fall instead of the spring to match the typical college timeline for admissions.

This study was limited to assisting group members in discovering and proclaiming their careers. All participants declared they wanted to go to college; however, they did not know what they wanted to major in. In Domain 4 theme 2, the participant's confidence in going to college

was strong, but they did not know what to focus on while in college. They were not able to articulate a specific goal to work toward. It is recommended that this be considered for future group planning.

There was a second round of interviews approved through the IRB to expand on understanding the experiences of the participants in greater detail and with additional questions (Appendix B. 2) which supported members checking their first responses to ensure accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking is a validation of a group member's experience. During interview 2, group members were given their transcripts from interview 1, journal entries, and worksheets from the group sessions to review and remind them of their work. Each group member confirmed and validated that the transcripts, journals, and worksheets are theirs and an accurate reflection of their experience with the group. The interview questions were different from the first set of interview questions in that there was a deeper focus on each session. Each participant was given their journal responses and worksheets to help them remember the session. Even more, certain words in the questions should be explained and defined to help clarify the questions. For example, the two words 'barrier' and 'navigate,' were difficult for some participants to understand. The researcher had to explain 'barrier,' in terms of challenges and difficulties they experienced, and 'navigate,' in terms of how they found a way or worked around. The researcher noticed this when a few participants gave blank stares and were unable to answer the interview question correctly. The researcher journaled in his reflexive journal, indicating that the vocabulary used for the interview questions needed to be reviewed to match the population.

Conclusion

This research captured the lived experiences of how Hmong adolescents in a Midwest high school experience small group counseling with lessons that offer an array of support for college and career planning. The findings of this qualitative phenomenological study suggest that group counseling can be effective in supporting their post-secondary planning. Group counseling work can help expose participants to new resources, help participants with their identity development, normalize their experiences, and validate their feelings.

This study contributed to the literature by examining group counseling for Hmong adolescents in addition to providing school counselors with a foundation when working with Hmong adolescents in a group counseling format. The themes that emerged confirmed much of the literature on Hmong students in high school (DePouw, 2012; Her, 2014; Kwan, 2015; Lee & Green 2008; Lee, 2002; Lee 2013, Lor, 2008, Lor 2018; Tatman; 2004; Thao, 2017; Vang, 2005, Xiong & Lam, 2013). With several enhancements and additions (Identity and Family, Support Network, Financial Aid, Understanding Beliefs about College and Career, Vision and Drive, and the College Student Panel), the group lesson plans used in this research are a template for other school counselors and educators to use when supporting Hmong adolescents with career and life readiness planning.

Lastly, this study shows that Hmong adolescents are bicultural scholars with aspirations for college and a successful career. Through the school they enroll in, they depend on the support, resources, educators, and school counselors to help them understand their options and opportunities. To support Hmong adolescents, it is imperative that school counselors make conscious, targeted approaches to connecting with them. The school counselor should initiate the first meeting. As Hmong students continue to acculturate into their community and better

understand their bicultural identity, school counselors are vital in helping them each step along the way of their journey.

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APPENDIX A

Weekly Journal Prompt:

1. What did you learn or become aware of today that you did not know about before (head), how are you feeling as you leave group today (heart), what knowledge or skills are you taking with you as you leave today (feet) or more simply thinking, feeling, action/doing.

APPENDIX B

Guide for Initial Interview Questions

Adapted from Malott et al., (2019)

1. What are your plans after high school?
2. How is our school preparing you for your plans after high school?
3. How confident do you feel about going to college?
4. How confident do you feel about your career plans?
5. What strengths do you have that will help you be successful in college or your career?
6. What barriers do you think you might face? How do you plan to navigate them?
7. How would you describe your overall experience in the group?
8. Describe what was talked about in the group that was most meaningful to you and why?
9. What changed for you, after participating in this group?
    a. (if anything did change): what about the group experience brought about change?
    b. (if nothing changed): what could the group have done differently, to make the group more helpful for you?

APPENDIX B. 2

Guide for follow up interview questions

Adapted from Malott et al., (2019)

1. How is our school preparing you for your plans after high school?
    1. What has been the most helpful so far?
    2. Who were the people (peers, educators, counselors, paras, coaches, administrators) who helped in this journey and how did they aid you?
    3. What were the resources and how they did they aid you?
2. What more would you like to see our school provide for you to help with college/career planning?
3. What were your plans after high school before this group?
    1. What support/advice/suggestions were you given that helped you make that decision?
4. What are your plans now after attending this group?
    1. Describe what did you learn from our sessions that was helpful?
    2. What did other group members say or do that influenced you?
    3. Detail what session you enjoyed the most and tell me more about what you enjoyed?
    4. How satisfied are you with your participation in the group? Do you think you influenced others in the group? If so, how?
5. Session 1, we created a family shield to help you better understand your identity. What was something you learned about your identity and your family's identity that you didn't know before?

6. Session 2, we talked about barriers that prevented Hmong students from going to college based on two studies. In one study, Xiong & Lam (2013) Article shared the following: Navigating the higher education system, lack of experience with counseling support, lack of educational skills, cultural barriers, financial barriers, and gender differences. What barriers resonated with you? What is one intervention you learned from this group that you can use to solve/prevent/avoid that barrier?
7. Session 3, we discussed what your college and career vision was like in grades K-5, 6-8, and now in high school. Share how your college and career vision has evolved between those grades, what experiences brought about those changes, and how the group has impacted this change now moving forward.
8. Session 4, we discussed a 6 month to 5-year goal at three levels: college, career, and community. Even more, you mapped out action steps for each goal. How likely are you to follow through with these goals? How have you made progress toward this goal since the group ended?
9. Session 5, we had a Hmong college panel come and share their experiences as college students. What did the panel members share that stood out to you the most? Seeing a Hmong college student panel, did that motivate/inspire/encourage you? If so, how?
10. Session 6, we had a financial aid expert come in who was Hmong. She shared information on financial aid and much more. Describe how this helpful? What insight did you gain from this session? Were there areas on confusion that you need more clarity on, if so what? Being she was Hmong, did that help you better understand the information?
11. Describe how confident you feel about going to college?
    1. What factors impact your confidence level?

12. Explain how confident do you feel about your future career plans?
    1. What factors impact your confidence level?
13. Please share what changed for you, after participating in this group?
    1. (if anything did change): what about the group experience brought about change?
    2. (if nothing changed): What could have went differently to make this group more helpful?
14. What 3 words would you use to describe your experience of the group?

APPENDIX C

1. Name
2. Grade
3. Age
4. How do you identify yourself?
5. What are your plans after high school? How is our school preparing you for your plans after high school?
6. Do your parent(s) have a college degree?

APPENDIX D

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Parents:

My name is Xeev Xwm Vang. I am a doctorate student at Minnesota State University, Mankato in the Department of Counseling and Student Personnel at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am also a school counselor at Hopkins High School and have been employed for 10 years. Currently, your student is being invited to participate in a research study that will explore how Hmong college and career readiness is impacted by group work. The purpose of this form is to request for your consent for your student to participate in this research study. Your student has the opportunity to participate in this study by meeting the following inclusion criteria: 1) Hmong, 2) enrolled at Hopkins High School, 3) has a block/class that allows them to attend the weekly group. Your student's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your student's decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Hopkins High School and Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty, loss of benefits, or any impact on their enrollment and experience at Hopkins High School.

Overview of the Study

The research will be conducted by Xeev Xwm Vang and supervised by Dr. Tracy Peed, principal investigator and professor in the Department of Counseling and Student Personnel at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This is a qualitative research study focused on how the college and career readiness of Hmong participants are impacted by group work through a series of 6 sessions. The group will consist of Hmong participants and myself as the group leader. The purpose of this research study is to understand how the 6 group sessions impact the college and career readiness of each Hmong participant. Xeev Xwm Vang will be conducting all of the interviews in-person and collecting the data. The only people allowed to see the raw data collected are Xeev Xwm Vang and Dr. Peed. There will be two research assistants that will be reading the data collected, however your student's identifying information will be removed before. It is estimated the time commitment for this will be attending 6 group sessions that will total 6.8 hours total. There are two primary data sources. The first will be a recorded audio interview where Xeev Xwm Vang will ask your student 7 open-ended questions about their experience in group and the second will be journal entries your student will complete after each group session responding to a prompt. The interviews will occur in person and be audio recorded for future analysis. They are expected to take approximately 45 minutes to complete. In order to accommodate your student's schedules, Xeev Xwm Vang will be sure that the group sessions and interviews are conducted at a time that does disrupt your student's schedule, particularly the core subjects. The interviews will be held privately in Mr. Vang's office in person.

Potential Risks and Benefits

With this study, there are some possible risks that may or may not involve emotional or mental stress or discomfort in being asked to share personal thoughts about your student's college and career plans and share their personality/interests/skills results to the group. Your student can choose to skip any interview questions if they feel uncomfortable answering the question. Your student may also stop the interview at any time if it becomes too uncomfortable,

by letting Xeev Xwm Vang know they would like to stop. There are no consequences for stopping. There is some hope that the 6 group sessions will help your discover more about themselves through college and career planning. Your student may also be more aware of their college and career plans leading to making a decision that will meet their post-secondary goals and future career goals along with learning ways that can help them with their academics now.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your student's privacy and confidentiality will be managed to the utmost extent possible. Confidentiality will be protected in a number of ways. The interviews will take place in a private room where distractions and extraneous noise are less likely to occur. The interviews will occur in person and only the audio will be recorded. After the interview, the content stored on the digital recording device will be downloaded to a password-protected computer for transcription. Your student's information will be de-identified through the transcription process. This includes the interview and the journal entries. After the transcription of the interviews, all recordings will be deleted by Mr. Vang. Your consent form for participation will be deleted after three years by the principal investigator, Dr. Peed. The interview transcriptions will be deleted after five years by the principal investigator, Dr. Peed, and student researcher Mr. Vang. Your student has the right to stop participating in the study at any time without any consequences by informing Mr. Vang. If your student agrees to participate in the study they are free to not answer any question that they prefer not to. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by storing information electronically, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager. If you have any questions prior to signing this consent form, please feel free to contact Dr. Peed (tracy.peed@mnsu.edu; 507.389.5240 or Xeev Xwm Vang (xeev.vang@mnsu.edu; 952-988-4605). If you have questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board at (507)389-1242.

If you and your student agree for your student to participate in the study, please complete one copy each of the assent and informed consent and return the signed copy. By signing both the assent and consent form, it means you and your student both have read and understood the information provided, that you willingly agree to have your student participate, that your student may withdraw at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, and that you both have received copies of these forms. Thank you for your consideration.

Parent Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E

CHILD ASSENT FORM

My name is Xeev Xwm Vang. I am a doctoral student at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am doing a study to understand how group work impacts Hmong participants with their college and career planning. I am asking you to participate in the research study because I believe you will be a great match for this study. For this research, you will be asked to join a group with other participants from this school that will meet for 6 sessions (6 weeks). The group will meet once a week with a focus on college and career readiness. After the 6 group sessions, I will interview you so I can better understand how the group impacted you. All your answers will be private and I will not show them to other students or any teachers at school. Only my supervisor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, my two research assistants, and I will see them. I do not think that any big problems will happen to you by being a part of this group and study, but you might wonder about your future and what you want to do now. I hope by being a part of this group, you become more aware of your options for college and career. Please know that you do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You will not get into any trouble if you decide not to participate. Your parent(s)/guardians were asked if it was ok for you to be in this study. If they say it is ok, it is still your choice whether you participate or not. You can ask any questions you have at any time. If you think of questions at any time, you or your parents can contact me at xeev.vang@mnsu.edu; 952-988-4605.

Sign this form only if you: Have understood what you will be doing for this study, Have had all your questions answered, Have talked to your parent(s)/legal guardian about this project, and Agree to participate in the research study

_____

Your signature Printed Name Date

APPENDIX F - Weekly Group Sessions

Week 1 - Group Introduction and Family

- ➢ Lor (2008) Cluster 1: Family Support
- ➢ Goal: Students will be able to (SWBAT) learn about themselves and their family.
- ➢ Objective: SWBAT create an ID shield for themselves and their family then share with the group.
- ➢ Lens: College and Career

Instructions:

1. Cut the questions from Group Discussion and place them in a box.

Introductions

a. Explain purpose of group
b. Work on group norms/rules

1. Activity 1 (Self)

c. Group members complete the Self ID Shield (Independent Work)
    i. Give each group member the shield
    ii. Answer each prompt
d. Each group member shares their ID shield (Group Share)
    i. Sharers: Share their shield
    ii. Listeners: Snap a finger if shared information resonates with yours

2. Activity 2 (Family)

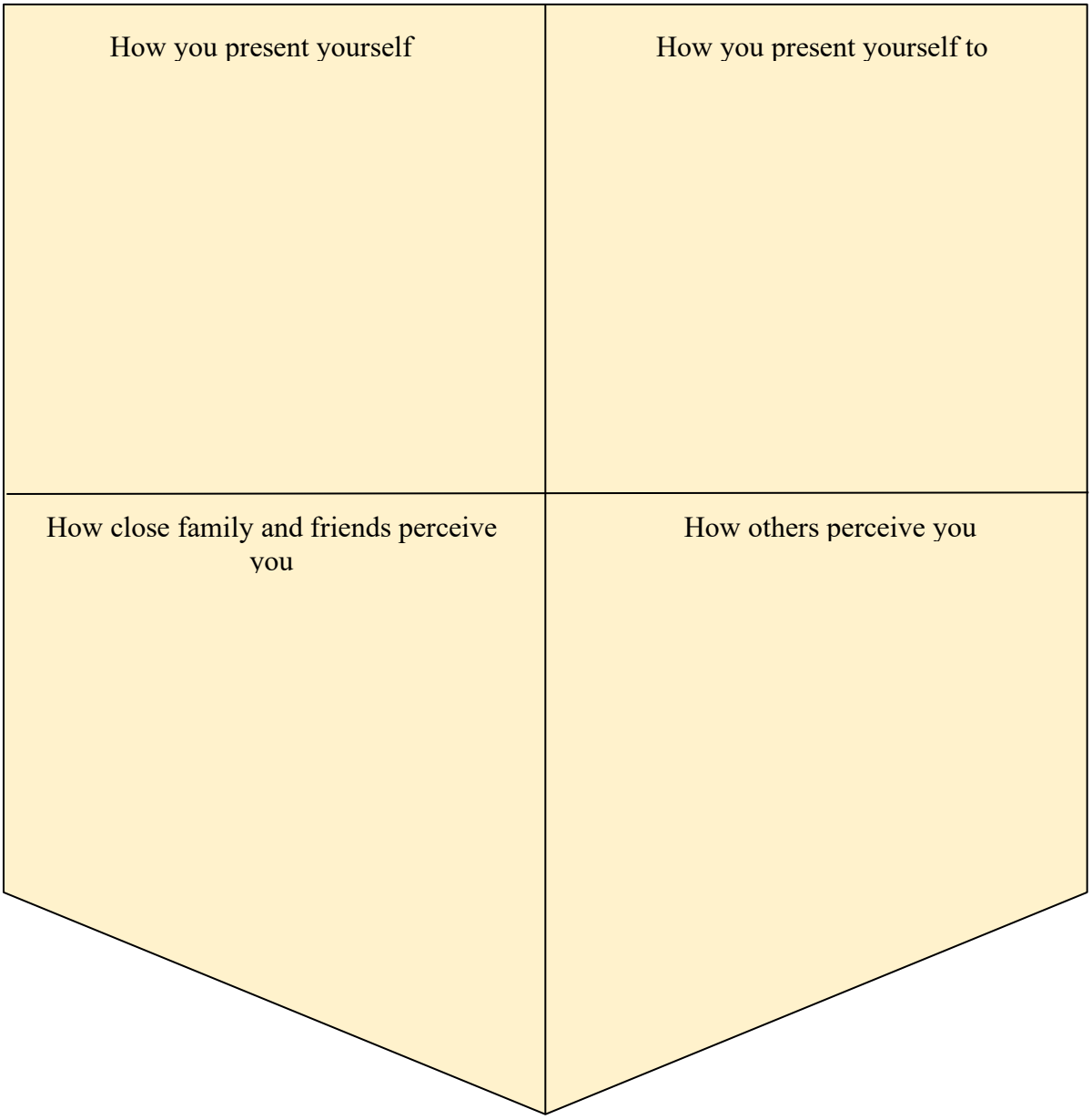
e. Group members complete the Family ID Shield answering each prompt (Independent Work)
    i. Give each group member the shield
    ii. Answer each prompt
f. Each group member shares their ID shield (Group Share)
    i. Sharers: Share their shield
    ii. Listeners: Snap a finger if shared information resonates with yours

3. Group leader prompt questions (Group Discussion).

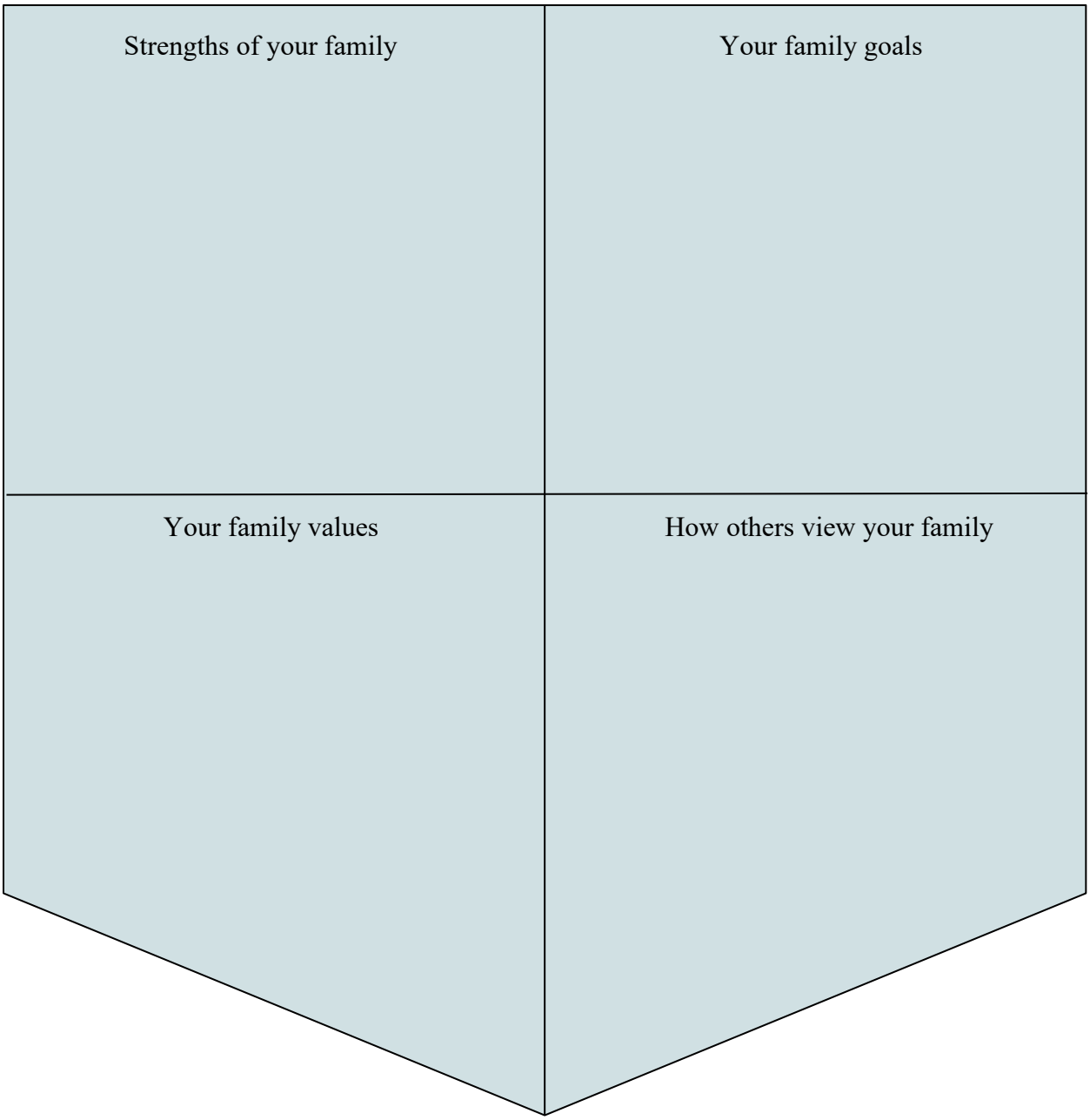
g. Place box of questions and ask each participant to grab on prompt and share

- Self ID: What are some of your strengths
- Self ID: How do you present yourself at school?
- Self ID: How do you present yourself within your community?
- Family ID: What do you admire most about your family?
- Family ID: How has your family supported you through school?
- Family ID: What are your family's beliefs on college and career?

Self ID Shield



Family ID Shield



Week 2 - Support Network

- ➢ Lor (2008) Cluster 2: Educator, Peer, Co-Curricular Support.
- ➢ Goal: SWBAT will understand barriers Hmong students face and how others can support them.
- ➢ Objective: SWBAT read article then respond by completing a Write Pair Share.
- ➢ Lens: College and Career
- ➢ Article: Xiong and Lam (2013) and Lor (2008)

Instructions: Activity 1 of 2

1. Print each article prompt. Cut each and put in a box.
2. Group members randomly grab one and read it to themselves.
3. Then group share:
    a. Read the prompt
    b. Share 1 thing that resonated
    c. Share 1 action step to navigate
    d. Group members respond

Xiong & Lam (2013) Article:

Navigating the higher education system.

Participants reported having difficulties in navigating the higher education system, for example not knowing the academic requirements, admission requirements and campus resources. Kou did not know 'what G.E. courses were' and what coursework was needed to complete his degree, so he 'just took classes [he] didn't even need' and 'declared psychology', not knowing 'what classes to take to fulfill the requirement'. This delayed his admission to graduate school by one year. May's advisor asked if she wanted to get a BA or BS and she wondered, 'Ok, I thought there was only one bachelor's degree'.

Lack of experience with counseling support.

In undergraduate years, only May identified counselors as a supportive factor, indicating that her 'advisor was probably the most helpful person on campus'. Bee 'never really had a full experience with [his] counselor' and 'kind of brushed it off' when it came to seeing a counselor. Cha lamented that the counselors 'didn't [say] you should ... you need a master's to do that ...I think you can do it. There wasn't a push'. In graduate years, only May and Bee indicated that they had received support from counselors. As a graduate student, Kia did not seek out counselors because of minimum exposure in her undergraduate years, so she 'never attempted during [her] grad years'.

Lack of educational skills.

Cha was the only participant who reported having struggles with basic educational skills in writing. As a graduate student, Cha continued to struggle with 'writing papers... exams... more presentations than ever... more of that reading'. Kou was fine during his undergraduate years but felt unprepared academically for graduate studies: 'the workload increased 20 times... the whole studying process, the time management, everything had to change'. Another skill in college education is taking steps to make decisions, such as choosing majors. As an undergraduate student, Bee struggled with 'not knowing who I wanted to be like ... what to do with my life ... how to develop those skills to start thinking about your future'.

Cultural barriers

Cultural obligations. On weekends, Kou's family 'would do shamanistic ceremonies', so he 'had to balance time [for] family and ... education'. Kia cut study time to attend ceremonies, thereby 'running on 4 hours of sleep since [she] started grad school'. Despite careful planning, May still found that 'some months are a struggle'.

Gender differences.

Bee contrasted how girls ‘can’t go out this late ... have to do the dishes... get up at this certain time of the day to cook for everybody’ while boys ‘come home whenever they want, do whatever they want’. In-laws of Kia and May expected them to seek employment after getting their bachelor’s degrees, which ‘pulls you back and de-motivates you’, and triggered the guilt of not being a ‘good mother, a good wife, and a good daughter-in-law’

Financial barriers

To save money, Kou had to live with his brother and commuted 3045 minutes to campus, which became so hectic that he had to change college. Kia almost quit when her financial aid was in jeopardy. May moved out of town to attend college only because of grants. Financial concerns led to the dilemma of working and going to school at the same time or quitting jobs and facing financial stress. Bee chose the latter and had ‘really no money’. Kia worked ‘40 hours while going to school ... one of the first times to juggle work and school’.

Instructions: Activity 2 of 2

1. Give group members the article findings below
    a. Cut each of the six statements below.
    b. Ask group members to grab one.
    c. Read the statement.
2. Complete Write Pair Share
3. Identify trusted adults

Week 2 Worksheet

Lor (2008) article:

1. First, the findings highlight the pivotal role that family support plays in the education of Hmong students.
2. Second, the findings extend and deepen current understandings about the roles that teachers, professors, classmates/friends, co-curricular activities, and counselors play in the life of Hmong students.
3. Third, with a lack of financial resources available to Hmong students from parents and family members, the findings provide clear evidence of the critical role that financial aid has on Hmong students' matriculation and graduation from college.
4. Fourth, the findings provide insight into participants' mindset and psychological landscape that has allowed them to matriculate and graduate from college.
5. Fifth, it will be important for first generation Hmong college graduates to promote and advance the personal and professional benefits of a college education to future Hmong students.
6. Finally, future Hmong college students must be aware of the changes that are occurring in the Hmong community.

Write	Pair	Share
My thoughts	My partner's thoughts	What we will share together

Identify Trusted Adult:

_____

Identify an Educator:

_____

Week 3 - Financial Aid Presentation

- ➢ Lor (2008) Cluster 3: Financial Aid
- ➢ Goal: SWBAT better understand financial aid.
- ➢ Objective: SWBAT meet and discuss financial aid options for college and ask questions and converse with a financial aid expert.
- ➢ Lens: College and Career

Financial Aid Guide: Adapted from Collegeboard Big Future:

1. What's the average total cost — including tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, travel, and other personal expenses — for the first year?
2. What have you seen as the main barrier for Hmong students?
3. Who in financial aid should I contact if I have questions about paying for college?
4. How often should I meet with someone in financial aid?
5. Does financial need have an effect on admission decisions?
6. What is the priority deadline to apply for financial aid and when am I notified about financial aid award decisions?
7. How is financial aid affected if I apply under an early decision or early action program?
8. Does the college offer need-based and merit-based financial aid?
9. Are there scholarships available that aren't based on financial need and do I need to complete a separate application for them?
10. If the financial aid package the college offers isn't enough, are there any conditions under which it can be reconsidered, such as changes in my family's financial situation or my enrollment status (or that of a family member)?
11. How does the aid package change from year to year?
12. What are the terms of the programs included in the aid package?
13. What are the academic requirements or other conditions for the renewal of financial aid, including scholarships?
14. When can I expect to receive bills from the college and is there an option to spread the yearly payment over equal monthly installments?
15. Are there translators available?

Week 4 - Understanding Beliefs on College and Career

- ➢ Lor (2008) Cluster 4: Vision and Drive
- ➢ Goal: SWBAT discuss and share their beliefs about college and career.
- ➢ Lens: College and Career
- ➢ Objectives: SWBAT discuss the impact of family and culture on their understanding of college and career.

Instructions:

Activity 1

1. Project topics listed below for group members to see on a smart board.
2. Give group members post-it notes and respond to each: Your belief, your family, your peers using the two lenses, College and Career.
    a. Prompts:
        i. What are your beliefs about college and career?
        ii. What are your family's beliefs about college and career?
        iii. What have teachers told you about college and career?
3. Group members will post theirs on the board.
4. Group members will add a sticker to statements that stand out to them
5. Group members will add another sticker to statements that they have heard the opposite.

<u>Topics:</u>
Majors
Minors
Programs
Financial Aid
Out of state
In state
Career
Roommate
Professors
Job
Food
Rent
Salary

	Your belief	Your family	Your peers
College			
Career			

Activity 2: Timestamp Stations

1. K-5: What was your college/career vision during this time? Who inspired you?
2. 6-8: What was your college/career vision during this time? Who inspired you?
3. 9-12: What was your college/career vision during this time? Who inspired you?

4. College/career: What does it feel/smell/sound like? Describe the feelings that come up for you when you hear the words college and career?

Week 5 - Vision and Drive

- ➢ Lor (2008) Cluster 4: Vision and Drive
- ➢ Lor (2008) Cluster 5: Promotion and Advancement
- ➢ Goal: SWBAT promote and advance the benefits of a college education for other Hmong students.
- ➢ Lens: College and Career
- ➢ Objectives: SWBAT project a 1-year plan, 5-year plan, and 10-year plan.

Instructions:

1. Prompt: What does collectivism mean to you?
2. Video: Sunisa Lee - Giving back to the Hmong Community through Gymnastics.
    a. What action steps did she take to get where she is now?
3. Give group members the goal planning form to complete.
4. Once all group members completed the form, share with 2 other group members to add additional action steps. The additional steps can be short term realistic goals.

Week 5 Worksheet

College Goal

6 months from now	1 year from now	5 years from now
Action Steps	Action Steps	Action Steps

Career Goal

6 months from now	1 year from now	5 years from now
Action Steps	Action Steps	Action Steps

Community Goal

6 months from now	1 year from now	5 years from now
Action Steps	Action Steps	Action Steps

Week 6

- ➢ Goal: SWBAT meet and discuss with a college panel about their experiences in college and what they will take away from the panel experience. In addition, understand the social capital available to them.
- ➢ Lens: College and Career
- ➢ Objectives: Ask questions and conversate with a college panel.
- ➢ Question list.
- ➢ Approach: Inside circle.
    - Use the chairs to build two circles. One inside and one outside. Presenters will sit on the outside circle and the group participants will sit in the inside circle. Participants have 5 minutes each to discuss with the panel member. Group members will be given the interview guide below to ask the panel members.
    - Shoutout: each group member will share 1 thing they learned and 1 thing that inspired them. Each panel member will also be asked to share 1 advice.

Interview Guide: Influenced by Lor (2008) study

1. Tell us about yourself, your college, and your major.
2. How did your family support you with college/career?
3. How did family/educators/counselors/teachers/advisors/professors/classes help you decide that college was where you want to be after high school?
4. What changes in the Hmong community are you seeing that impact the college and career options for Hmong high school students?
5. How do you plan to give back to the Hmong community?
6. What advice would you give to Hmong high school adolescents who are not sure if college is a fit for them?
7. What advice would you give to Hmong high school adolescents who are not sure of a career path?

APPENDIX G

Domain 1: Family

Theme 1 Family members are a major source for post-secondary planning

Subtheme 1- participant felt they must make post-secondary decisions that impacted their family

Theme 2 Family values impacted beliefs on future planning

Theme 3 Parents have different expectations for boys and girls (Dual spectrum)

Theme 4 Hmong culture impacts post-secondary planning

Subtheme 4 Participant identity was supported through group work.

Domain 2: Barriers

Theme 1The English Language is a barrier to education

Theme 2 The cost of college is a barrier

Theme 3 Understanding the American culture was difficult for both participants and their parents.

Theme 4 Participants acknowledged they lack educational skills.

Domain 3: Group experience

Theme 1 Through group, participants learned what they had in common.

Subtheme 1 – A group with members and presenters who are alike helped normalize their experiences.

Theme 2 Group logistics and planning for future small group work

Theme 3 The group sessions were helpful.

Domain 4: Post-secondary Plans

Theme 1 Career development

Theme 2 Participant confidence about post-secondary planning varied but was generally low.

Domain 5: School Environment

Theme 1 Participants know the resources in their school.

Theme 2 Participants struggled to connect with non-Hmong peers in schools

Theme 3 Participants were able to identify educators who can support them in school.

Appendix H

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MANKATO

January 19, 2023

Re: IRB Proposal [1988896-2] Enhancing College & Career Readiness of Hmong Adolescents Through Group Work in High School
Review Level: Exempt (Level I)

Congratulations! Your Institutional Review Board (IRB) Proposal has been approved as of January 19, 2023.

Please remember that research involving human subjects under the purview of the IRB should adhere to the most current COVID-19 guidelines available, as set by MSU, Mankato and the Minnesota Department of Health.

On behalf of the Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB, we wish you success with your study. Please remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study (https://research.mnsu.edu/institutional-review-board/proposals/process/proposal-revision/).

Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcomes, you are required to report them immediately to the Associate Vice-President for Research and Dean of Extended Campus at 507-389-1242.

When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request. All documents related to this research must be stored for a minimum of three years following the date on your Closure request (https://research.mnsu.edu/institutional-review-board/proposals/process/proposal-closure/).

If the PI leaves the university before the end of the 3-year timeline, he/she is responsible for ensuring proper storage of consent forms (https://research.mnsu.edu/institutional-review-board/proposals/process/leaving-campus/). Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

Be well,

Julie Carlson, Ed.D.
Co-Chair of the IRB

Chelsea Mead, Ph.D.
Co-Chair of the IRB

Jason A. Kaufman, Ph.D., Ed.D.
Director of the IRB

May 8, 2023

Re: IRB Proposal [1988896-3] Enhancing College & Career Readiness of Hmong Adolescents Through Group Work in High School
Review Level: Exempt (Level I)

Dear Tracy Peed, Ph.D:

Your proposed changes to your Minnesota State University, Mankato Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research ([1988896-3] Enhancing College & Career Readiness of Hmong Adolescents Through Group Work in High School) have been accepted as of May 8, 2023. Thank you for remembering to seek approval for changes in your study.

Please remember that research involving human subjects under the purview of the IRB should adhere to the most current COVID-19 guidelines available, as set by MSU, Mankato and the Minnesota Department of Health.

Please remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study (https://research.mnsu.edu/institutional-review-board/proposals/process/proposal-revision/).

Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcomes, you are required to report them immediately to the Associate Vice-President for Research and Dean of Extended Campus at 507-389-1242.

When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request (https://research.mnsu.edu/institutional-review-board/proposals/process/proposal-closure/). Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

Be well,

Jeffrey Buchanan, Ph.D.
Co-Chair of the IRB

Chelsea Mead, Ph.D.
Co-Chair of the IRB

Jason A. Kaufman, Ph.D., Ed.D.
Director of the IRB