Factors affecting the success of Hmong college students in America

Soua Xiong, Reedley College
Sarah K. Y. Lam, California State University, Fresno
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Soua Xiong\textsuperscript{a} and Sarah K.Y. Lam\textsuperscript{b,*}

\textsuperscript{a}Student Support Services Program, Reedley College, Reedley, CA, USA; \textsuperscript{b}Department of Counselor Education & Rehabilitation, California State University, Fresno, CA, USA

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This study explores barriers and success factors of Hmong students in American colleges by interviewing five Hmong graduate students from refugee families in the US. Emerging themes revolve around academic, cultural and financial barriers. Professors, advisors, classmates, academic support programmes, family, financial aid and their own psychological resources were identified as supportive factors in addressing their academic, cultural and financial needs. Implications and recommendations are drawn on how college counsellors and other professionals may best assist Hmong college students.

Keywords: counselling in higher education; cross-cultural issues; educational guidance; ethnicity

Introduction

About 16 million refugees were forced to leave their homeland across the globe in 2008. Refugee families face hardships that may affect their transition to the hosting country and their children's integration into that society (Baker, 2011). What factors would help children of refugee families to overcome barriers and succeed in higher education? This study attempts to explore these factors through the lived experiences of Hmong descendants of refugees in the US.

The Hmong are an ethnic group that traditionally lived in the highland areas of Laos. Since 1975, due to political turmoil and war, many Hmong have fled Laos, with 90\% of Hmong refugees settling in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2012) and others settling in France, Canada, Australia, Argentina and French Guyana (G.Y. Lee, 2012). The Hmong population has reached 260,073 (US Census Bureau, 2010). After 30 years of resettlement, Hmong children compared unfavourably in educational attainment, with Hmong Americans having 27.2\% high school graduates, 11.7\% associate or bachelor's degree holders and only 1.5\% with graduate degrees, whereas the national population has 49.7\% high school graduates, 21.9\% college degree holders and 8.9\% with graduate degrees (Yang & Pfeifer, 2004).

Hmong children may experience risk factors for college failure commonly shared by students who have low socioeconomic status (Heissner & Parette, 2002), belong to ethnic minorities (Arredondo & Knight, 2005–2006) and/or are first-generation college students (Lehmann, 2007). However, they may experience these risk factors more intensely in their unique contexts. For example, economic barriers for the

\textsuperscript{*}Corresponding author. Email: sarahl@csufresno.edu

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Hmong are higher than for other ethnic groups, with the lowest per capita income of any racial/ethnic group nationwide, unemployment rates higher than the national average, twice the national average living in overcrowded housing, a rate of one in three living below the poverty line and one third of children living in poverty (Asia Pacific American Legal Center & Asian American Justice Center, 2011). Other barriers may arise from cultural values and practices that pose difficulties when Hmong students pursue higher education (S.J. Lee, 1997; McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005; Rudd & Leimer, 2009), such as early marriage (Lor, 2008; McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005), discouragement of female students from pursuing higher education by in-laws (S.J. Lee, 1997; Vue, 2007) and family obligations that compete with time and energy needed to complete a post-secondary education (McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005; Vang, 2004–2005). Family obligations may include ‘administering over cultural ceremonies, resolving family disputes, communicating with clan leaders, and meting out justice according to Hmong customs and norms’ for Hmong boys (Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010, p. 16), household chores for Hmong girls (S.J. Lee, 2001) and ‘interpreting for their parents, driving their parents to appointments’ (S.J. Lee, 2001, p. 512). Furthermore, intergenerational differences in acculturation (Su, Lee, & Vang, 2005) may create conflicts that affect a Hmong student’s persistence in college (Lee, Jung, Su, Tran, & Bahrassa, 2008; Lee & Liu, 2001; Supple et al., 2010) due to a heightened level of distress (Su et al., 2005).

On the other hand, certain aspects of cultural values and practices reportedly contribute to Hmong students’ success in higher education (Lor, 2008; Supple et al., 2010; Yang, 2008, 2011). These aspects include parents’ emotional and financial support (Lor, 2008; McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005); childcare, encouragement and spiritual support (Lor, 2008); role modelling and inspiration from older siblings who are currently attending or have completed post-secondary education (S.J. Lee, 1997; Lor, 2008); and spousal support necessary for women to continue their education (S.J. Lee, 1997). The study of Lor (2008) listed positive impacts from the following sources: classmates and friends who provided emotional support during challenging situations and motivated each other to excel in their work (p. 42); engagement in extracurricular and scholarly activities (p. 43); instructors, professors and counsellors who provided academic support (McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005) by motivating, encouraging, empowering and fostering a comfortable classroom atmosphere and academic learning environment (p. 42); support services such as counselling, academic services, co-curricular activities and educational conferences and workshops that provided opportunities for Hmong students to develop leadership skills, utilise academic programmes and services and persist in college (p. 43); and financial aid to relieve Hmong students from financial worries to focus on their academic coursework (p. 46).

College guidance counsellors in different student affairs programmes have the mission to intervene in potential student failure through advising and counselling services. Advising models differ in degrees of the counsellor’s directiveness and student’s independence, ranging from prescriptive, developmental to high involvement advising (Heissner & Parette, 2002; Vander Schee, 2007). Similarly, counselling approaches adopt various points of entry – behavioural, emotive, cognitive or physiological – and recommend different conditions of counsellor-client relationships (Corey, 2009). Comprehensive understanding and appreciation of barriers and success factors for Hmong college students are crucial for guidance counsellors to
identify the advising models and counselling approaches that are most effective with this unique group of students.

The current study builds on findings from available literature on barriers and success factors for Hmong descendants of refugee families to succeed in higher education and attempts to bridge the information gap arising from the following factors. For years, the Hmong were classified as Asian Americans, commonly seen as the model minority. Hmong students' needs in their pursuit of higher education have been under-identified (Suzuki, 2002; Yang, 2004). For example, some recent studies conducted on counselling issues relating to Asian American college students do not include Hmong students (Kim & Park, 2009; Miller, Yang, Hui, Choi, & Lim, 2011; Wang & Kim, 2010) while other studies on Asian American college students' suicide ideation (Wong, Tran, Koo, Chiu, & Mok, 2011), counselling utilisation (Kearney, Draper, & Baron, 2005) and development of an integrated self (Syed, 2010) do not provide disaggregated data on individual Asian ethnic groups. Furthermore, these studies address mental health counselling rather than guidance and counselling in higher education. Even in the Hmong Studies Journal, only five articles can be found with a focus on Hmong college students from 1996 to 2010. Lor's study published in 2008 took place more than 10 years ago (1995–2001). More current findings on a new generation of Hmong college students who have succeeded in reaching graduate level with implications for guidance and counselling are needed.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to explore barriers and success factors of the current generation of Hmong college students through examining their experiences in completing an undergraduate programme and enrolling in a graduate programme. The study was guided by the following research questions: (a) What barriers do Hmong students face in their college education? (b) What factors do Hmong students find helpful in overcoming these barriers?

**Method**

We employed a qualitative grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) by conducting in-depth interviews to explore participants' experiences during their undergraduate and graduate years, using a semi-structured interview protocol to allow the participants to share their individual educational experiences in an open-ended format. A grounded theory approach is appropriate for this study since only a few studies on Hmong college students are available and this approach allows the emergence of themes to be grounded in the data without using any preconceived theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Building upon prior studies on the educational experiences of Hmong college students, guiding questions were developed that focused on barriers participants encountered in undergraduate and graduate education and factors that helped them to complete an undergraduate degree and to pursue graduate studies. The instrument was first pilot-tested for format, content and clarity with a current graduate student in the Counsellor Education programme of the university where participants were enrolled. Changes were made based on suggestions taken from the pilot interview. In addition, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire on their family background, status as first-generation college students, year they completed their undergraduate degree, year
they started their graduate programme, and supportive factors during undergraduate and graduate education.

The first author conducted all interviews as an insider, being a Hmong American and first-generation college student, and having work experiences with Hmong college students. The ‘insider’ benefits of personal understanding of the culture and greater ease in establishing rapport with participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) contributed to participants’ seemingly free, open and comfortable responses to interview questions. Interviews were conducted in a reserved group study room in the university library. All interviews were conducted in English, according to the preference of the participants. Interviews were audiotaped and each lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Ethical considerations

Before conducting the research, permission was obtained from the Human Subjects Review Committee of the university where the study took place. Participants received an informed consent form which gives detailed disclosures to participants, including confidentiality and right of withdrawal at any time of the interview. Interviews began only after the participants had signed the consent form. To address the issues arising from the first author being an insider, pseudonyms were used to protect participants’ identities to maintain confidentiality, and the first author engaged in ongoing reflective discussions with the second author, who comes from a different ethnic group, over bias factors such as over-identification and projection.

Participants

Purposive, convenient and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) was conducted to identify participants using the following criteria for participation: students of Hmong descent, enrolled in a graduate programme at the research site, and willing to share their educational experiences. The first author identified the first participant through a Hmong student currently enrolled in a graduate programme at the research site. After completing the interview with this first participant, the researcher asked for referrals to identify other Hmong students who met the criteria established for participation. With the referral from this first participant, the researcher went through the same recruitment process until five participants were identified. The first and second participants referred in this process were male and the third was female. To have more even numbers in gender, the first author asked the third participant if she knew any female Hmong students. Subsequently, she referred one female and one male student. Participants were invited to participate in the study through email messages.

Participants consisted of five (three male and two female) graduate Hmong students at a public western university. All participants were enrolled full time and ages ranged from 25 to 27. Three participants were in their third year, one participant was in his second year, and one in her first year of the graduate programme. All participants were enrolled in majors in the helping professions: counselling, psychology and public administration.

All participants’ parents were refugees who came to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Two participants were born in Thailand and the rest were born in the US. Among them, three were single. One was the oldest child, one was the
youngest child, and three were in the middle. All participants indicated fluency in written and spoken English and in spoken Hmong. Fluency in written Hmong varies from two as fluent, two as semi-fluent, to one as not fluent. In terms of mother’s educational level, two participants reported ‘None/Unknown’, two ‘No High School’ and one ‘Associate’s Degree’. In terms of father’s educational level, one participant reported ‘None/Unknown’, two ‘No High School’, one ‘High School (in Thailand)’ and one ‘Bachelor’s Degree’. The majority of the participants (four) had siblings who had received at least a bachelor’s degree or above. Only one participant was the first in her family to attend college.

**Research site**

This research took place in 2011 at a public university of a medium-size town on the US west coast. This university is the largest institution of higher education in the local community, and has the second largest concentration of Hmong population in the country (Pfeifer & Lee, 2004). Disaggregated data of Hmong students as a group were made available in the fall of 2009. Among new undergraduate students enrolled in the fall of 2009, only 7% were Hmong students, with 97% of them being first-generation students (followed by Hispanics at 84%), 51% having parents who never attended high school (followed by Hispanics at 25%) and 62% having parental combined income below $24,000 a year (followed by African Americans at 42%). Hmong students in this university were more likely to major in the health and human services (Rudd, 2010).

**Data analysis**

Audio tapes of interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis using the steps of the constant comparative method from the grounded theory approach to extract themes (Boeije, 2002; Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All incidents were coded separately. New incidents were compared with previous incidents of the same and different codes. After all relevant responses had been coded, we used specific sub-categories to organise the codes to help to identify main categories or themes. We arrived at a consensus over common themes after making modifications when disagreement arose. To enhance inter-coder reliability, we reviewed codes several times to ensure that they fitted the data and that enough data were there to support the coding. A matrix with categories of themes and quotes from each interviewee corresponding to the themes was used to guide the report of findings.

**Results**

Participants’ responses were classified under barriers in higher education and success factors in higher education.

**Barriers in higher education**

Themes under barriers in higher education include academic, cultural and financial barriers.
Academic barriers

Under academic barriers are the sub-themes of navigating the higher education system, lack of experience with counselling support and lack of educational skills.

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 fulfil 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’. Kia did not participate in any academic support programme as an undergraduate student. She explained that not knowing about any programme services ‘hindered’ her in utilising those services. When Kia learned about the McNair programme, it was ‘already too late’ because she ‘was close to completing her degree’. Participants linked their difficulties in navigating the education system to their sense of isolation: having ‘no one’ who ‘tells me I can do it’ (Cha); who ‘sits down and talks with me about goals’ (Bee); who ‘are my family or relative’ (Kou); and whom ‘I can ask questions’ (May). As the only Hmong and only male on a graduate course, Kou found it ‘hard just to meet halfway and work out…differences…hard just fitting in with the group’. When May relocated to attend graduate school in a different state, she felt like ‘starting…college experience over again…didn’t really know anybody’.

Lack of experience with counselling support. In undergraduate years, only May identified counsellors 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] counsellor’ and ‘kind of brushed it off’ when it came to seeing a counsellor. Cha lamented that the counsellors ‘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 counsellors. As a graduate student, Kia did not seek out counsellors 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’. He had to learn how to ‘analyse things, think about things, and plan things’ in his undergraduate years.
Cultural barriers

Cultural barriers identified by participants include the struggle over balancing responsibilities towards academic work and cultural obligations, gender differences in expectations and demands, and survivor’s mentality.

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. Female participants experienced different expectations and added pressure. 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’.

Survivor’s mentality. Bee’s family did not help him to plan for the future. His reasoning was: ‘All the war and pain that our parents and grandparents gone through. You just kind of live day-to-day and try to survive... they tell us to go in school and do what the teacher tells you... they never really take the time... to help you plan out the future’.

Financial barriers

To save money, Kou had to live with his brother and commuted 30–45 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’.

Success factors in higher education

Contributing factors were categorised under academic, cultural and financial support. In addition to external support, participants’ descriptions about how they handled challenges revealed their own psychological resources.

Academic support

Participants identified professors, advisors, academic support programmes, classmates and siblings as sources of support. Kia’s professor helped ‘with understanding concepts’ and ‘guided’ her to ‘write a research proposal’. Kou’s professors ‘helped whenever [he] had questions’, such as ‘What careers are out there?’ and explained what he ‘needed to enter graduate programmes or possible careers’. When Kou’s academic standing fell below the minimum grade point average of 3.0 for graduate students, his professor ‘sat [him] down and talked [him] through it’. May’s professors
helped her with ‘doing projects’ and ‘growing as an individual’. Participants also
elaborated on facilitative qualities of interaction. Kia described her professors as
‘very open . . . easy to ask for assistance’ and ‘very understanding’ of her struggle with
work and school. May’s advisors ‘not only gave [her] tools but cared about [her] as a
person’. Kou’s professor was willing to ‘sit down’ with him.

Academic support programmes also contributed to participants’ higher edu-
cation. The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) helped Cha to ‘become aware of
the campus . . . about college life, the stress . . . the workload’ and ‘making next year as
a freshman a smoother transition’. He learned ‘time management’ and ‘man-
ging . . . workload and stress’ from academic advising workshops. May found her
participation in Project Forward helpful since it provided an opportunity for her to
connect with ‘other Hmong students who were in the same major’ and ‘with
professionals as well’.

Support from friends and classmates included forming study groups and
discussing academic progress towards the completion of undergraduate degrees.
Kou’s friends affirmed his ‘talents to go higher’, ‘pushed [him]’ and made him ‘more
inspired to reach higher education’. Cha’s friends looked ‘over [his] writing . . . finding
information for [him]’ and ‘influenced [him] into the field of social work’. Kia and
her peers ‘counted on each other to get through the [graduate] class’. Kou told his
classmates about falling below the minimum grade point average and they helped
him ‘a lot with the academic aspects of it’.

Siblings also provided guidance, advice, encouragement and role modelling in
completing college education. Kou’s siblings ‘could walk [him] through the process’
and ‘did all the financial aid paperwork’ for him. ‘They explained to [him] the
[general education] courses and what was required’. Cha’s brother encouraged him —
“You’re the only one in the family that has gone pretty far . . . can do more. I believe in
you’ — and served as a role model since Cha saw his brother ‘as successful within
[their] blood, within [his] family’.

Cultural support
When participants mentioned cultural support, they all reported sources coming
from their families. Participants mentioned emotional support, advice, attendance at
campus activities and events, tangible care, high value on higher education and
respect for their decision to pursue college education. For example, Kia lived with her
parents and she did not ‘have to worry about anything home-related’. The tough life
that Bee’s mother lived motivated him to ‘go beyond that and have a better life for
[his] kids’. His mother’s pride in his work ‘inspired’ him more. May’s parents
‘instilled in [them] the importance of college’.

Participants perceived success in college as a way of giving back to their families.
Bee wanted to ‘eventually be able to help [his] mom’ after graduation. May wanted to
fulfil her parents’ dream to have their children ‘not just get their bachelor’s degree but
master’s and doctorate degree’, and considered herself a role model for her siblings.
May’s belief that college education ‘is not just to better [herself] but to better the
whole family’ kept her in college. Kou viewed ‘getting a higher education, a better
job, and then taking care of them’ as his way of ‘giving back’ to his parents for all
their support.
Financial support

All participants identified financial aid as crucial in making higher education accessible to them. Without financial aid, Kia ‘would not have been able to complete [her] education’, and Bee might have ‘become a gang banger or somebody on the street’.

Psychological resources

When ‘faced with the most difficulty in life’, May explained that she had the ‘internal motivation to do well’, saying, ‘When two sides were pushing at you, it propels you further’. Kia balanced her role as a daughter-in-law and a college student, telling herself, ‘I’m an individual who has aspirations and goals and I know where I want to go. I know what I want to do’. Kou admitted to himself, ‘I did have self-motivation...I did push myself...’.

Discussion

Characteristics identified in prior studies such as not being informed and trained to excel in college (Yang, 2004–2005) and lacking basic academic skills (Rudd & Leimer, 2009) were also reported by our five participants. Similarly, the challenge to find time to balance academic and cultural responsibilities permeated through both undergraduate and graduate education for the participants. Our findings about struggles for Hmong women to pursue graduate studies are consistent with previous findings (McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005). The participants’ financial concerns and strong fear of debts resonates with the financial hardships facing the Hmong population (Asia Pacific American Legal Center & Asian American Justice Center, 2011).

Since most participants expressed difficulties in navigating the educational system, guidance counsellors could have played a crucial role. Our findings of few participants considering counsellors as a support factor suggest that counsellors might have been underutilised. Underutilisation of guidance counsellors may explain why Hmong students seek guidance on career goals, research opportunities and graduate school information from professors during both undergraduate and graduate years. Our participants had little idea about counselling benefits, which is similar to findings in other studies on counselling utilisation by ethnic minority college students (Kearney et al., 2005). Our findings give further inroads into what Hmong college students would consider as positive interactions with their helpers: expressing belief in them and care for them through seeking them out, pushing them and telling them what they can do and how to do it. The lack of experience or experiences with counsellors that do not meet participants’ expectations may have contributed to the underutilisation of counsellors.

Familial, financial, social and academic support and psychological resources are instrumental in overcoming barriers to success. Many of the parents in this study were similar to Hmong parents in previous findings, having limited or no formal education in the US but having a positive impact on their children’s educational pursuits (Lor, 2008; McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005). Our findings resonate with previous studies about the financial and emotional support from Hmong parents and family members as a success factor for their college students (Lor, 2008;
McClain-Reulle & Xiong, 2005; Supple et al., 2010; Yang, 2008, 2011). Our findings about siblings’ contributions in the form of role models and assistance with the college admissions process and friends’ roles as emotional outlets for stress and group support for academic work are consistent with previous findings (S.J. Lee, 1997; Lor, 2008). An emerging insight we discovered was refugee parents’ survivor’s mentality, focusing on living in the moment instead of planning for the future. Understanding the world view and mindset that Hmong college students may have received from their parents may enhance counsellors’ understanding of how these students approach their education.

Limitations of the study

Patton (2002, p. 306) detailed the limitations of interview data as ‘possibly distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview’. Participants’ responses are also subject to recall error (Patton, 2002). The interviews relied on a one- to three-year recall period as participants recollected their experiences in both undergraduate and graduate years.

Implications

Our findings show that similar struggles for several generations of Hmong children have persisted over 30 years, but that these children are capable of academic success when appropriate and timely support is available. The findings of this study have implications for college counsellors, professors and student services personnel who work with Hmong college students.

Firstly, Hmong college students tend to look to family members, relatives or friends to help them to navigate the higher education system and develop a sense of belonging. When these individuals are not available, they feel ‘on their own’ and ‘lost’. A college community that provides family-like qualities of relationship could help Hmong students to break isolation and reach out for resources. For example, a mixed group of peer mentors from both Hmong and other ethnic groups with diversity proficiencies could provide a safety net for Hmong students to experience support in a relatively heterogeneous setting.

Secondly, college orientation meetings for both Hmong college students and their families could be held throughout the college years, addressing academic needs in each successive year and introducing campus resources that help them to meet those needs. Thirdly, more active promotion of services of academic advising and visibility of academic counsellors on campus could help Hmong students to see the relevance of academic counsellors as a part of their support system. Regarding counselling intervention, as underscored by Heisserer and Parette (2002) and Vander Schee (2007), the unique contexts and needs of individual college students affect the effectiveness of different advising approaches. Similarly, different conditions of counsellor–client relationships may affect how college students respond to counselling (Corey, 2009). College counsellors who use prescriptive counselling by simply giving information and telling students what to do may not help Hmong students to develop skills in problem solving and decision making. A developmental approach to counselling that coaches Hmong students to learn how to find information and weigh the usefulness of information could be more helpful. Client-centred counselling that
stresses a non-directive approach may leave Hmong students feeling lost, and counsellers taking a neutral stance may leave the impression of not caring for the student. High involvement counselling that pushes students and holds them accountable may provide what Hmong students need as a family-like level of involvement in their lives. Solution-focused counselling may build students' self-efficacy while reality counselling may help Hmong students learn how to balance different needs.

As the enrolment of Hmong students increases at institutions of higher education, additional qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to further examine the educational realities of Hmong college students. Findings from quantitative data may represent a bigger population of the Hmong students and other minority student groups. A focus group with parents could explore how parents perceive their role in their children's higher education and what assistance they need to help their children. Future research should be conducted to gain insight into the help-seeking behaviours of Hmong American college students, the campus resources they utilise more often and the purpose of their visits. With an understanding of their help-seeking behaviours, university faculty and staff may be able to identify what services are more or less effective and utilised and what changes to make to improve services for Hmong college students.

Notes on contributors

Soua Xiong holds an MS in Counseling option in Counseling and Student Services and is an Adjunct Counsellor. His research focuses primarily on the Hmong population, but more generally it involves the educational experiences of underrepresented minorities in higher education. In particular, his research examines barriers, success factors and cultural issues.

Sarah K.Y. Lam is an Associate Professor at California State University, Fresno and a licensed marriage and family therapist. Her research is in service learning in counsellor education, peer mediator programmes, counsellor trainees' self-efficacy and cultural issues. She trains graduate students in the field of student affairs and college counselling.

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