

Hmong American College Women's Experiences of Parent-Child Relationships

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the Lord, Jesus Christ. I could not have done this without Him. I also dedicate this dissertation to my loving family, my husband, Daniel, and daughters, Angela and Rebecca.

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the parent-child relationships of Hmong American college women. Fourteen women in their junior or senior year from five Midwestern colleges or universities participated in the study. Symbolic interaction theory was used as a guiding framework and a phenomenological method was employed to understand the Hmong American college women's lived experiences of independence from and closeness to their parents and the perception of their role and identity in their interactions with parents. Analyses of the interviews revealed seventeen domains in total under three primary themes, including (1) I am more independent, (2) I am closer to my parents, (3) I am struggling to find a balance. The emerging developmental task for these college-age Hmong American women is to successfully negotiate roles and identities while balancing both cultures. Implications of the study are also discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Hmong

Hmong historical and immigration background. Hmong people originally migrated from northern China approximately 4000 years ago (Hamilton-Merritt, 1993; Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990). They settled mainly in mountainous areas of Laos, running households and farms. Until the Vietnam war and subsequent displacement, the Hmong were geographically and culturally isolated from the outside world (Donnelly, 1994; Faderman, 1998; Hamilton-Merritt, 1993; Lamborn & Moua, 2008). Due to their involvement as allies of the U.S. government in the Vietnam War, thousands of Hmong fled Laos to Thailand for fear of persecution by the Communists (Faderman, 1998; Hamilton-Merritt, 1993). Many people died either during the War or as they crossed the Mekong River to seek shelter in Thailand (Hamilton-Merritt, 1993).

After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the Hmong immigrated to the U. S. as refugees. They are considered newer Asian immigrants whose experience of migration is quite different from groups who voluntarily immigrate (Rumbaut, 2006; C. Y. Vang 2004). It is estimated that 48.6% of the Hmong population born outside the U. S. entered this country in 1990 or later (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The largest Hmong population resides in the state of California, followed by Minnesota and Wisconsin (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Pfeifer & Lee, 2004) with the Twin Cities ranked as the metro area having the greatest number of Hmong people in residence.

Traditional Hmong community, family, and roles. In the traditional Hmong community, social relationships are built on the patrilineal family (Donnelly, 1994;

Faderman, 1998; Trueba et al., 1990). The approximately 20 patrilineal Hmong clans provide members with social support and regulate marriage by disallowing marital unions within the same clan (Donnelly, 1994). Within a family, gender hierarchy is emphasized with male figures as the main decision-makers. Decisions are based on the needs of the households instead of individuals. Donnelly (1994) described this phenomenon in traditional Hmong households:

Access to choice, and therefore training and experience in decision making, was accorded to men and boys, but not to women and girls, they maintain, because men constituted the economic core of the household, and the unit of decision was actually the household, not the individual. All family members were expected to submit to what was perceived as the overall welfare of the group; what that welfare was, was decided by the men (p.29).

Historically, the Hmong, an agrarian society, practiced early marriage; the typical age of marriage was around 15 for girls (Donnelly, 1994; Lee, Xiong & Yuen, 2006; McNall, Dunnigan, & Mortimer, 1994). A traditional Hmong woman usually raised ten or twelve children and spent her whole life serving her husband and family (Faderman, 1998). Until the most recent decade, early marriage for Hmong women was still being practiced by many families in the United States (Lee et al., 2006; Ngo, 2002; C. T. Vang, 2004).

The demographic context of Hmong immigrants in the U.S.. With a relatively high fertility rate compared to other ethnic groups, the Hmong American population is quickly increasing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The U.S. Hmong American population

growth rate was 97% from 1990-2000 and 175% between 1990 and 2010 (Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, & Yang, 2012). On a state level, the Hmong American population grew from 45,443 in 2000 to 66,181 in 2010, an increase of 46 percent in Minnesota (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Hmong American families are often large; the average Hmong American family size is 5.80 compared to 3.14 in the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Hmong Americans are relatively young. Their median age is 20.4 compared to 37.2 in the total American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Hmong American people rank as one of the poorest U.S. immigrant groups with about 27.3% living under the poverty line compared to 11.2% of the total population, 25% of African American, and 22% of Hispanic American groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey). Hmong American parents tend to work different shifts and/or multiple jobs to support their families (C. Y. Vang, 2004). Educationally, 14% of Hmong Americans have higher than a bachelor's degree compared to 28.2% in the total (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Many Hmong American families do not speak English at home. It has been estimated that 88.7% of the Hmong American population older than 5 years speak Hmong at home compared to 22.6% of the total U.S. population who speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Current Hmong American family profiles. Hmong American parents consider education the most effective tool to achieve success in the host culture and encourage their children to complete high school and go to college (Moua & Lamborn, 2010). When it comes to religious beliefs, many families hold onto their traditional Shamanism while other families have converted to Christianity (Faderman, 1998; Moua & Lamborn, 2010;

Trueba et al., 1990). Most Hmong families still underscore the importance of ethnic community and family ties and expect their children to carry family responsibilities (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Tatman, 2004). Oftentimes it means that the wellbeing of the family and community is seen to have more weight than individual wants or needs (Tatman, 2004). Scholars have found that parent-child conflict exists within contemporary Hmong immigrant families (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Vang, 1999; Xiong, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2004-2005; Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2008). One area in which conflict can occur is gender roles. Elders attempt to retain traditional Hmong gender hierarchies (Donnelly, 1994; Faderman, 1998), which creates conflict for Hmong American girls who are then caught between traditional Hmong culture and mainstream culture gender ideologies. The intergenerational clash is especially noteworthy when female adolescents desire more autonomy in their social life during their transition to adulthood (Rumbaut, 2000; Vang, 1999). This conflict is further exacerbated by the increase in Hmong women pursuing higher education and careers outside the home (C. T. Vang, 2004; Pfeifer, 2008; Xiong & Lee, 2011). As a result, contemporary Hmong families are required to negotiate and integrate traditional beliefs with mainstream U.S. cultural values.

Statement of the Problem

The specific historical, cultural and socioeconomic contexts make Hmong American college women the most needed group in terms of their developmental tasks and their relationships with parents. Because teen marriage remains common in the Hmong community and remains a significant challenge to educational achievement (Lee,

1997; McNall, et al., 1994; Ngo, 2002; Vang, 1999; C. T. Vang, 2004), redefining gender roles including opting out of early marriage and pursuing higher education and careers is a developmental task that Hmong American young women increasingly must negotiate and resolve (Julian, 2004; Lee, 1997; McNall et al., 1994; Ngo, 2002). The gender role expectation is still prevalent in many Hmong families, meaning that daughters are often expected to carry more domestic responsibilities than sons (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; C. T. Vang, 2004). Although the literature documents the aforementioned changes in the lives of young Hmong American women, little is known about their relationships with their parents during this time of significant change. Moreover, studies that focus on parent-child relationships during the transition to adulthood do not often explore the cultural underpinnings of this important transition.

Significance of the Study

College-going students are likely situated in a stage characterized by life markers including leaving the parental home, completing education, and preparing for a career and marriage (Galambos & Kotylak, 2012). Research on mainstream American young adults in college claims that the achievement of balance between autonomy or independence from, and closeness or connectedness to parents plays the most vital part in the college student's life adjustment (e.g., Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984; Frank, Pirsch, & Wright, 1990). However, the meanings of independence and closeness are experienced differently for people from different cultures (Chung, 2001; Lee & Liu, 2001; Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006). For instance, first generation college students and ethnic minority students from collective societies can have different experiences of

independence from/connectedness to parents from their mainstream counterparts (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005; Ishitani, 2003 & 2006; Ong et al., 2006; Sy, 2006).

Additionally, the college-going stage is conceptualized as “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 1998 & 2000). Not being totally independent from parents, an emerging adult has three primary developmental milestones including considering future occupation, seeking the right love partner, and developing her own values (Arnett, 2000). It was proposed that an emerging young adult’s identity is determined mainly in these three respects (Ibid.).

However, identity work associated with the immigrant child’s role is complex. When interacting with their parents, immigrant college children must negotiate multiple identities including American identity, ethnic identity (Ong et al., 2006; Phinney, 1990 & 1992), and first-generation college student identity (Ishitani, 2003 & 2006; Orbe, 2000; Yeh, 2004), etc. Further, there is evidence that female college students’ identity work is even more complex and dynamic for the children from patriarchal cultures of origin (Maramba, 2008). Although it has been suggested that immigrant adolescent girls desire more autonomy in their social life (Rumbaut, 2000), ethnic minority or immigrant college women’s experiences of their relationships with their parents are rarely explored.

At the intersection of gender and ethnicity, Hmong women college students’ experiences appear to be underexplored. Although the rate of Hmong women who enroll in college and above has reached 28.7% (U.S. Census, 2010), going to college is a very recent trend for Hmong women whose family cultures support more traditional gender roles. Many Hmong students are actually first generation college students themselves who experience family related barriers to completing higher education including

economic or gender role issues (Lee, 1997; Yeh, 2004). Although a few studies have explored the factors impeding Hmong women's pursuit of higher education, the literature is scarce (Lee, 1997; Ngo, 2002). No studies have focused on the Hmong college women's parent-child relationships.

Although traditional beliefs and cultural practices associated with gender roles are well documented in Hmong studies (Donnelly, 1994; Vang, 1999; C. T. Vang, 2004), one can lose sight of and fail to capture the dynamic parent-child relationships which are enacted in multiple contexts. Hmong culture should be considered complex and dynamic rather than simplistic and static (Lee, 1997; Ngo, 2002). Sporadic research suggests that parental control is more likely than cultural norms (i.e., early marriage) to contribute to dropping out of college. Two studies especially point out that some Hmong college women chose to marry to escape strict parenting practices (Lee, 1997; Ngo, 2002).

To gain a greater understanding of the Hmong women's experiences of parent-child relationship, the author was guided by symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993) to focus on the life experiences of participants within their social and cultural contexts. This study explores the complex contexts in which Hmong women experience and make meaning of their relationships with their parents, specifically being independent from and connected to them.

To gain a deeper understanding of Hmong American college women and their relationships with their parents, researchers must move beyond the standard approach that attempts to quantify the factors contributing to their independence from/closeness or connectedness to their parents. This study employed in-depth interviews to allow

participants to use their own words to share their lived experiences and the meanings they attach to them (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 2006). Giorgi's (1985) descriptive phenomenological method was employed as the analytic approach.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the parent-child relationship as experienced by 14 Hmong American college women. Two research questions guided the study:

1. What are Hmong American college women's experiences of being independent from and close/connected to their parents?
2. How do Hmong American college women perceive their role and identity in their interactions with parents?

Definition of Terms

College women. College women are defined as women who are currently enrolled in four-year degree-granting institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) as dependent undergraduate students under age 24 (Wei et al., 2009).

Parent-child relationships. This widely used term adopted for the present study symbolizes a unique social interaction that occurs between parents and children. From the symbolic interaction perspective (Blumer, 1969) an individual (parent/child) acts toward the other (child/parent) recognizing him or herself as a man/woman, parent (father/mother) or child (son/daughter), young in age, a student, a member from a certain ethnic group, etc. through interaction including verbal and nonverbal communications

and actions (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). For this study, parent-child relationships refer to Hmong college women's relationships with their birth parents.

Roles. This study deals with the meaning of "roles" such as daughter, mother, father, referring to "position within a social organization" (i.e., family) (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p.147).

Identities. This term refers to "self-meanings in a role" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p.145). A person can construct multiple identities in a specific role and there is a hierarchical organization of self-meanings. When she interacts with others in a given situation, salient identities can be invoked more than others (Ibid., p.146).

Contexts. Parent-children relationships are embedded in various contexts, which are conceptually considered as "the general and continuing multilayered and interwoven set of material realities, social structures, patterns of social relations, and shared belief systems that surround any given situation" (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). In the present study, context elements can include immigration status, socioeconomic status, cultural norms, educational systems, religious belief, etc.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Hmong American college women are at a crucial developmental phase where their relationships with parents can be more dynamic than at any other stage. Their specific social and cultural contexts can make parent-child relationship experiences in this college-going stage even more complex than for their mainstream peers or Hmong American male counterparts. Nevertheless, as an emerging generation of college-going young people, Hmong-American women are rarely studied in terms of their family relationships in this critical period. This chapter will first review research that informed this study followed by an exploration of how the symbolic interaction framework guided the formulation of the study's research goal-- to better understand Hmong college women's lived experience of their parent-child relationships.

Mainstream College Student Studies on Parent-Child Relationships

Normatively, college students are in late adolescence or young adulthood, a vital developmental stage in which they develop a sense of personal identity and establish close ties with others (Erikson, 1968). A fairly large body of research has examined college students' adjustment, particularly their psychological closeness to parents, and their identity, individuation or separation from their parents (Campbell et al., 1984; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993; Frank et al., 1990; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Kenny & Rice, 1995; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988; Miller & Lane, 1991; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990).

Several studies have examined the contexts of children's transition to college during their freshman year (Berman & Sperling, 1991; Campbell et al., 1984; Holmbeck

& Wandrei, 1993; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kenny & Rice, 1995; Rice et al., 1990; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). The decision about where to live has been found to be related to the establishment of independence or autonomy and the development of emotional connectedness to parents (Berman & Sperling, 1991; Miller & Lane, 1991). Studies have assumed that beginning college is likely associated with leaving home for the first time or have suggested that this leaving-home experience helps facilitate individuation (Berman & Sperling, 1991; Flanagan et al., 1993; Miller & Lane, 1991). Staying at home during the college years could increase the probability of parent-child conflicts (Flanagan et al., 1993). However, findings across the aforementioned studies are not consistent in suggesting whether or not leaving home for college can predict a psychologically close relationship between the parent and child. For example, a study of college freshmen found a positive association between physical proximity with parents and a parental attachment bond, suggesting that the children living at home remain emotionally involved with parents (Berman & Sperling, 1991). Two studies claimed that whether children leave home for college or not may not be a factor predicting the college children's adjustment as salient in their psychosocial relationship to parents (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Another study found that college students' increased psychological distance from parents can bring insecurity that results in the hindrance of autonomy, while simultaneously providing opportunities to develop independence (Frank et al., 1990).

Across the relevant studies, college women and men were found to have different experiences in parent-child relationships. The studies agreed that women tend to show

more emotional closeness to parents or tend to perceive more emotional support from their parents (Berman & Sperling, 1991; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Lopez et al., 1988). Women tend to be sensitive to family distress when it comes to parent-child relationships. In dysfunctional family contexts, women demonstrate more conflict with and attachment to parents than men (Lopez et al., 1988). Women are more likely than men to be strained in their role taking and social position in the family as a mechanism to maintain parents' approval or support (Lopez et al., 1988). Furthermore, parental gender plays a vital role in parent-child interactions in terms of emotional closeness and independence. For example, children tend to maintain deeper bonds of affection or dependency with mothers than with fathers; they tend to develop independence more with fathers than with mothers (Campbell et al., 1984; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989).

College children's perceptions of their relationships with parents are salient in predicting how they cope with identity challenges and maintain psychosocial well-being (Campbell et al., 1984; Frank et al., 1990). Marcia (1966), Toder & Marcia (1973) suggested that a stable identity is suggested to be especially important in predicting women's psychological adjustment during the college years. Achieving such a stable identity means that a person either has experienced the decision-making process with respect to her career and values and has made commitments to them, or she remains largely committed to parental beliefs and has made some decisions on her own, whereas an individual experiencing instability in their identity does not have a definite commitment or remains primarily uncommitted to occupation and personal ideology (Marcia, 1966; Toder & Marcia, 1973).

Research has consistently provided evidence that college students with positive psychological well-being are those who are able to achieve a balance between emotional closeness with parents and feeling more control or having autonomy in their lives (Frank et al., 1990; Miller & Lane, 1991). From a Western cultural perspective, separation or independence from parents symbolizes that a child has shaped his/her own values and beliefs that are discrete from those of their parents (Frank et al., 1990; Marcia, 1966; Rice et al., 1990; Toder & Marcia, 1973). Except for considering some demographic factors such as living arrangement or gender, college students' development of autonomy, separation, or independence and connectedness to parents has rarely been examined within diverse socioeconomic or cultural contexts.

Emerging Adulthood: A Useful Perspective

“Emerging adulthood” conceptualizes a developmental phase roughly between the ages of 18 to 25, during which young people in contemporary industrialized societies experience ambivalence in taking on adult roles and responsibilities (Arnett, 1998, 2000 & 2004; Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark & Gordon, 2003). For many young adults in mainstream society, this is the time period in which they attend college. In Arnett's study of emerging adults, the three most mentioned criteria for achieving adulthood are: accepting responsibility, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (1998). Furthermore, Arnett (2000) claimed that an emerging adult's personal identity is determined in romantic relationships, work, and world views. Emerging adults consider future occupation, seek the right love partner; and develop their own values during this crucial development stage.

College students experience more freedom from parents' surveillance compared to their earlier years, but have not attained full independence from parents due to prolonged education and postponed marriage (Arnett, 2000). However, social and cultural contexts can cause variations in the assumption of adult roles (Arnett, 1998 & 2000; Cohen et al., 2003). For example, individuals from higher socioeconomic status families were found to be slower than their lower SES counterparts in developing adult roles in romantic relationships (Cohen et al., 2003). Therefore, it is important to consider how emerging adulthood is influenced by contextual factors such as cultural norms and socioeconomic statuses.

Cultural Minority College Students

Studies dealing with college students with diverse sociocultural backgrounds examined their family relationships and identity work from various perspectives including first-generation status, family obligation, cultural/ethnic identities and intergenerational conflict and acculturation gap.

First-generation status. Ishitani's longitudinal research (2003 & 2006) found that first-generation college (FGC) students were more likely than their counterparts to drop out of college, despite the suggestion that first-generation status can motivate college children to achieve academic success (Ishitani, 2006; Maramba, 2008; Orbe, 2004). FGC students often have to deal with low family income, high family demands and parental expectations, and academic under-preparedness (Maramba, 2008; Orbe, 2004; Xiong & Lee, 2011). Nevertheless, personal motivation (i.e., personal interest or desire to attain a rewarding career) was found to be more salient than parents'

expectations in predicting FGC students' college adjustment and their academic commitment (Dennis et al., 2005).

Most Hmong college students have first-generation status with limited knowledge about higher education (Xiong & Lee, 2011). The existing body of research has mainly examined the effect of academic attributes and family income on the attrition rate or timely completion of college, suggesting resources needed to facilitate FGC students' completion of postsecondary education (Ishitani, 2003 & 2006; Xiong & Lee, 2011). Xiong and Lee's study (2011) highlighted the importance of looking into family demands or parental expectations that are intertwined with the students' other needs (Xiong & Lee, 2011). Orbe (2004) also suggested that the status of FGC becomes more salient when it intersects with ethnicity, SES, and gender. Because FGC students often have to negotiate multiple roles and identities in their interaction with others; it is important to consider these factors when studying first-generation college students' experiences.

Family obligation. Family obligation, responsibility, interdependence are at times used interchangeably in the literature (Phinney, Dennis, & Gutierrez, 2005; Tseng, 2004). However, the conceptualization of either family interdependence or family obligation varies among these studies dealing with college going children. In other words, the aspects of family interdependence or obligations are not uniform in the studies. Some aspects are referred as cultural values, such as family connectedness or familialism, consulting parents when making decisions, or respect for family, and satisfying family needs first rather than individual needs (Maramba, 2008; Ong et al., 2006; Sy, 2006; Tseng, 2004). Other aspects tend to occur in the socioeconomic contexts or because of

immigration status, such as language brokering or translating for parents (Sy, 2006).

Some aspects are instrumental, such as “assisting with household tasks,” “running errands that the family needs done;” some are related to attitudes toward supporting and being proximate to their families in the future (Fuligni et al., 1999, as cited in Tseng, 2004).

For college students from diverse cultural backgrounds, family obligations need to be understood. For example in the Hispanic culture, spending time with families is considered a central aspect in family connectedness (Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008). Family obligation can signify that the immigrant children often have to carry some instrumental responsibilities in the family (Tseng, 2004). For example, the study found that some U. S.- raised college students are expected to reside at home because their parents rely on their assistance in translating (Tseng, 2004). Family interdependence or obligation appears a double-edged sword for many socioeconomically disadvantaged college students. The complexity of this concept has resulted in inconsistent findings across studies, especially quantitative research that looked into the effect of family obligation on the college child’s academic adjustment. On the one hand, it may motivate the child to pursue higher education, and persist in college (Ong et al., 2006; Phinney et al., 2005; Sy, 2006; Tseng, 2004). In this sense, certain aspects of family obligation can promote the immigrant college children’s academic success (Ong et al., 2006). On the other hand, the demanding aspect of it can hinder the college children’s academic achievement (Sy, 2006; Tseng, 2004). In a study of Latina college students, it was found that the more time they spend with families the less school stress they experience, but the

increased responsibility of language brokering predicts heightened school stress (Sy, 2006). The study with regard to disadvantaged Latino college students suggests that other contexts where the parent-child relationship is embedded need to be taken into account in studying the effect of family obligation or interdependence (Ong et al., 2006). Another gap with regard to family interdependence or obligation among cultural minority or immigrant college students is the unilateral outcome variable (i.e., GPA) (Ong et al., 2006). Given the central developmental tasks encountered by children at this stage (Arnett, 2000), how a college student negotiates family obligation and their need for independence in different areas including courtship, major or career selection and worldview remains least known in the immigrant family studies.

Cultural/ethnic identities. Erikson's (1968) framework of identity development in adolescence has been expanded to more fully encompass the experiences of ethnic minority or immigrant college students (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). These young adults must develop a bicultural or co-cultural identity in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, etc. (Bosher, 1997; Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Maramba, 2008; Orbe, 2004). Family is suggested to be one of the most salient contexts for culturally diverse college students to enact or negotiate their identities in their social relationships (Maramba, 2008; Orbe, 2004).

The most central aspect discussed in the studies of immigrant or ethnic minority college students' identity is ethnic identity, which refers to one's self-identification as a member of his/her ethnic group, including a sense of belonging and attitudes toward it (Ong et al., 2006; Phinney, 1990 & 1992). The significance of ethnic identity is well

recognized, and the effect of it on self-esteem is proved among diverse college students such as African Americans, Mexican Americans and Asian Americans (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Additionally, ethnicity identity, which develops through the college years, can inform college students' selection of major/career (Syed, 2010). Ethnic identity includes two components: exploration or search and commitment (Juang & Syed, 2010; Ong et al., 2006; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Syed 2010). Family provides the most important social contexts for parents to transmit messages including values and beliefs, norms, and attitudes related to their ethnic or cultural heritage (Juang & Syed, 2010). This link between "family ethnic socialization" and ethnic identity is especially evident in female ethnic minority college students (Juang & Syed, 2010).

Few studies have examined how minority or immigrant children negotiate mainstream cultural and ethnic identity. One study of Hmong college students proposed how this target group's self-identification reflected a bicultural orientation: they adopt more American behavioral patterns but retain more Hmong cultural values (Bosher, 1997). A study of African American college women found that their worldview reflected both individualistic and collectivistic patterns, depending on the context (Gushue & Constantine, 2003).

At the intersection of ethnicity and gender, immigrant college women can experience gendered identity in the home environment. For example, they may encounter more parental restriction in their social life and have to carry more family obligation compared to their male siblings (Maramba, 2008). Given the complex and dynamic

identity work, there is a great need to capture how immigrant college children such as Hmong women negotiate their multiple identities as mentioned above in their relationships with parents across various life areas.

Intergenerational conflict and acculturation gap. Studies have focused on culture-specific intergenerational conflicts among Asian Americans (Chung, 2001), racially diverse multiple groups (i.e., Asian American, Hispanic, and European American) (Lee & Liu, 2001), Asian Americans (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000), and Hmong Americans (Lee, Jung, Su, Tran, & Bahrassa, 2009; Su, Lee, & Vang, 2005). Across the studies, a significant association between cultural differences and parent-child conflicts was found (Chung, 2001; Lee & Liu, 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2009). Cultural differences between immigrant parents and their U.S. born or raised children interacted with a generational gap to impact college students' psychological well-being.

Asian American college children were found to have the greatest probability of intergenerational conflicts, probably due to significant differences between Western individualistic values and collectivistic parental expectations (Lee et al., 2000; Lee & Liu, 2001). Southeast Asian American college students demonstrated greater likelihood of family conflicts than other Asian groups such as Japanese Americans, who tend to be earlier immigrants than Southeast Asians (Lee et al., 2000). The Southeast Asian population is highly vulnerable for intergenerational/intercultural conflict with parents due to their involuntary immigration status and collective cultural values (Ying & Han, 2007).

These studies highlight that the impact of parent-child acculturation differences (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), prevalent among immigrant youth or adolescents, is also significant among college-age students. Restrictive parental control of daughters' behavior and dating is suggested to be the source of parent-child conflict when adolescent girls desire more autonomy in transitioning to adulthood (Rumbaut, 2000). However, the college-going stage opens more opportunities for a typical late adolescent or young adult to execute their autonomy in decision-making in many areas of their life. Although a study of Hmong college students did not find significant gender differences in reports of conflict with parents, the researchers suggested looking into more sensitive areas of college women's life such as courtship and marriage for future studies (Lee et al., 2009).

Pertinent Hmong Studies

Except for a few sporadic research studies about Hmong college students (Lee et al., 2009; Su et al., 2005; Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010), research that explores parent-child relationships are mainly focused on youths or young adolescents. Moreover, few studies focus on Hmong women (Donnelly, 1994; Julian, 2004; Lee, 1997; Ngo, 2002). Therefore, this section highlights findings from studies on Hmong youths to provide an initial glimpse into cultural influences on developmental task and family relationships that informed this study.

Hmong youth studies. Hmong children were reported to exhibit one of the highest rates of parent-child conflicts (Rumbaut, 2000). Most Hmong youth studies have examined the impact of intergenerational conflict or parental control on school performance and or delinquent behaviors (Lee, 2005; McNall et al., 1994; Supple &

Small, 2006; Xiong et al., 2008). Intergenerational conflict was also the primary focus of the few studies on college students as mentioned earlier (Lee et al., 2009; Su et al., 2005; Supple et al., 2010).

Hmong youth studies often underscore the specific historic, socioeconomic and cultural contexts that informed a typical Hmong youth's role expectation. For instance, their immigration status and low SES drove many Hmong parents to value academic achievement and motivate their children to receive higher education to improve their family status (McNall et al., 1994; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Xiong et al., 2004-2005). Studies found a role reversal common in many Hmong households; children often have to play their parents' translator or cultural broker in dealing with the outside world (Lee, 2005; Rumbaut, 2000). On the other hand, Hmong parents often have to work long hours to make ends meet (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; C. Y. Vang, 2004). The family SES and reversal role is suggested to be one reason why Hmong American adolescents' parental monitoring was lower than their European American counterparts (Supple & Small, 2006).

There is a significant gender role expectation in Hmong families. Hmong girls usually have greater family responsibilities than boys (i.e., caring for younger siblings and house chores) (Lee, 2005; Peng & Xiong, 2012). Besides, female adolescents tend to experience restrictive parenting in their social life (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Xiong et al., 2004-2005). Early marriage is common among Hmong adolescent girls (McNall et al., 1994).

The changing identities of Hmong women. The traditional nature of Hmong women's roles have been well-documented (Donnelly, 1994; Vang, 1999; C. T. Vang, 2004). Their primary roles are wife and mother; women are expected to provide childcare and domestic services. Given this cultural gender role norm, Hmong parents may not fully support their daughters' educational aspirations, fearing they might be too old to find a suitable marriage partner after completing college (Vang, 1999; C. T. Vang, 2004). On the other hand, many Hmong parents accept women's changing roles and encourage their daughters to pursue higher education to improve their family status (McNall et al., 1994; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Pfeifer, 2008; C. T. Vang, 2004; Xiong & Lee, 2011). Nonetheless, some parents still hold on to the gender roles by training their daughters to carry more family responsibilities than sons (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; C. T. Vang, 2004). If they do allow their daughters to attend college, it is not uncommon for Hmong parents to expect their daughters to attend a college close to home in order to also fulfill their family responsibilities (C. T. Vang, 2004).

Against the backdrop of traditional practices including the strict clan system, teen marriage, polygamy, and "kidnap" marriage, an educated Hmong American woman is depicted as translating a new construction of Hmong femininity in the public media (Julian, 2004). In dealing with Hmong women's educational aspirations and professional development, two studies brought up the concern of misusing a cultural difference model in interpreting the complex phenomenon. As Lee (1997) cautions, "the sole focus on cultural obstacles, however, has in effect ignored the existence of economic, racial, and other structural barriers to Hmong American women's educational achievement and

persistence” (p.804). Ngo (2002) investigated the “early marriage” phenomenon by problematizing the cultural difference model that attributes this reason for dropping out among those college women. She found from her study that some women opted for getting married instead of completing college because of the desire to escape strict parental control rather than the cultural practice. Both authors claimed that inappropriate use of a cultural difference model is the same as treating Hmong culture as static (Lee, 1997; Ngo, 2002). Therefore, it is suggested that Hmong culture should be considered dynamic and that Hmong American college women should be treated as “agents of cultural transformation” (Lee, 1997, p.807).

To avoid the bias of simplistically applying a cultural difference model to interpret a specific phenomenon, one should look into the parent-child relationships within the dynamic socio-cultural contexts. Given that there is a lack of research in the normative family interaction in the Hmong population (Lamborn & Moua, 2008), it is vital to allow the target group to articulate their lived experiences.

Theoretical Framework and Assumptions

Symbolic interactionists deem the negotiation of separateness and connectedness a crucial process when it comes to the psychosocial organization of family life (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). As is the case for most college students, Hmong college women’s interactions with their parents are grounded in unique meanings of self (Blumer, 1969). The present study is guided by symbolic interaction theory to inform the primary research questions and related interview questions. Seven assumptions associating three themes (i.e., meaning for human behavior, development or importance of self-concept, society)

were adopted for this study (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, pp. 143-144). Assumptions about the meaning for human behavior are: i) “Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them;” ii) “Meaning arises in the process of interaction between people;” iii) “Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with things he or she encountered” (Blumer, 1969, pp. 2-5 cited by LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). When applied to this study, the meaning of being independent from parents and being connected with parents poses as the first theme. Assumptions about the development and importance of self concepts are: iv) “Individuals are not born with a sense of self but develop self concepts through social interaction;” v) “Self concepts, once developed, provide an important motive for behavior.” Therefore, the identities and salience of identity in a daughter’s role is the second theme for this study. Lastly, assumptions about society are: vi) “Individuals and small groups are influenced by larger cultural and societal processes;” vii) “It is through social interaction in everyday situations that individuals work out the details of social structure.” The last theme can be considered as broader contexts in which the parent-child interaction occurs, including ethnic community and the mainstream society for the present study.

In light of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993) (see Figure 1), the meaning of separation or independence from parents, and connectedness or closeness to them, needs to be revealed from the Hmong American college women’s lived experiences of the parent-child relationship. This paper aims to better grasp the

meaning of their roles and identities, particularly as revealed within their interaction experiences with their parents. Therefore, two primary research questions were asked:

- 1) What are the Hmong American college women's experiences of being independent from and close/connected to their parents?
- 2) How do Hmong American college women perceive their role and identity in their interactions with their parents?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an in-depth understanding of Hmong American college women's experiences of their relationships with their parents. This chapter provides information about the methodological approach, philosophical assumptions, sampling procedures, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Methodological Approach

In order to capture the experiences of Hmong college women, this study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. The nature of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) is that "meaning is either taken for granted and thus pushed aside as unimportant or it is regarded as a mere neutral link between the factors responsible for human behavior and this behavior as the product of such factors" (p.2). Aiming to understand ordinary people's meaning of events and their interactions with others in specific situations, a phenomenological approach guided by symbolic interaction theory was well suited for the present study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). It allowed participants to use their own words to share their stories. In-depth interviewing was used to elicit descriptions of the life world of participants and the meanings attached to those experiences (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 2006). The researcher's fundamental commitment was "to make sense of the situation without imposing preexisting expectations on the research setting" (Patton, 1980, p.40).

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions of the present study are described in terms of the following inter-related phenomenology concepts.

The life-world. According to van Manen (1997), the phenomenon to be understood “is placed concretely in the life-world so that the reader may experientially recognize it” (p.351). This approach is used to capture the phenomenon of the parent-child relationship as it is present in Hmong American college women’s lived experiences (Giorgi, 1997).

Essence. Originating from Husserl’s “phenomenological philosophy,” phenomenology involves a description of lived experiences or perceived reality as it is presented to the consciousness (Giorgi, 1994). The experience of parent-child relationships, like other family values or practices, needs to be understood from the family member’s point of view. Knowledge of some reality comes through consciousness of it (Giorgi, 1994) (i.e., Hmong American women’s perceived reality or consciousness of parent-child relationships).

Bracketing. In order to comprehend a subject’s life-world, the researcher “must first arrive at it by a suspension, or bracketing, of all presumptive constructs about it” (Giorgi, 1985, p.91). Similar to “phenomenological reduction,” the term first presented by Husserl, “bracketing” means that one sets aside his/her natural attitude or common sense, cliché, presupposition, prejudices, and bias (Giorgi, 1994; Halling & Nill, 1995). The researcher needs to articulate or make explicit his/her presuppositions or theories because one cannot ignore or forget what he/she already knows (van Manen, 1990).

Interpretation. Data analysis in this mode of inquiry must involve interpretation.

According to Moustakas (1994), to attain a more complete and more meaningful understanding of the participants' lived experiences, reflective interpretation of the transcribed data is always required. The researcher and the participant are in the shared world and they construct meaning essential to the interpretation of the data and the phenomenon of Hmong American college women's perception of parent-child relationships (Morrow, 2005; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Sampling Procedures

Sampling was based on Morse's (1986, 1989) suggestion of adequacy and appropriateness. Because the present study sought to understand the meaning of lived experiences, a nonprobability sample was used to "maximize the opportunities to obtain the most insightful data possible" (Morse, 1986, p. 183). In this sense, the sampling process underscores the importance of gaining quality information instead of focusing on the number of subjects.

Criteria for inclusion in the study. Sampling involved the purposeful selection of participants who had experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007; Morse, 1989; Sandelowski, 1993), in this study the experiences of parent-child relationships of college students. The age range was between 18 to 23 years old, following the typical ages of college students and the U.S. Department of Education's national standard for dependency status (Wei et al., 2009). To allow for a longer time-frame from which participants could describe their college experiences, students in their junior or senior year were recruited. To reduce the variation in the sample, the study excluded students

whose parents were divorced or separated because their complex parent-child relationships go beyond the research interest of the present study. Therefore, participants selected for this study were female Hmong college students, age 18 to 23 in their junior or senior year of post-secondary education, who were born in or grew up in the U. S., and who were from intact families with parents living in the United States.

Recruitment. Recruitment procedures were approved by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board. A letter (see Appendix A) was sent out to executive directors or coordinators of selected Hmong social service agencies in a large Midwestern metropolitan area, the staff of the Hmong Student Association at a large, public Midwestern university, and attendees of a statewide Hmong leadership conference who had indicated an interest in Hmong-focused research. These contacts were asked to circulate within their respective communities an electronic recruitment letter with the principal investigator's contact information. Interested individuals contacted the researcher by email. Several interested students also asked to forward a recruitment letter to their friends or post in their social media. At initial contact, potential participants were provided a brief overview of the study including the topic, the confidential nature of the study, inclusion criteria, and that participation would involve an audio-taped interview. In this initial contact, the potential participants were assessed to determine if they met the inclusion criteria. Three interested students did not meet the criteria. The consent form (Appendix B) was sent to the qualified potential participants for review with an opportunity to ask questions about the study. At this point, one person decided she would not participate due to a busy schedule.

Sample size. The research goal was to understand the lived experiences and associated meanings of parent-child relationships of Hmong American college women. Therefore, a nonprobability purposeful sample maximized access to data that could contribute understanding and insight of that phenomenon (Morse, 1986; Patton, 1980). There are no definite rules about sample size in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Kvale's (1996) rule of thumb is "interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (p.101). Another useful principle is that one should stop when the data collection has reached a point considered "enough" or when the interviewer is not learning anything new or novel (Seidman, 2006).

As a guide, Dukes (1984) and Smith et al. (2009) suggested three to ten and three to six respectively to be a reasonable sample size for a phenomenological study; Morse (1994, 2000) recommended at least six subjects. Some other researchers proposed that phenomenological researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals (Creswell, 1998). No additional interviews were conducted when no new ideas emerged (Morse, 1986; Seidman, 2006). The final sample for this study was 14 individuals.

Participants. The 14 participants included 3 Hmong college women in their junior year and 11 in their senior year. They were studying at four-year postsecondary educational institutions in a large Midwestern metropolitan area including 6 universities or liberal arts colleges. Except the 3 junior students who were 20 years old, 11 were age 21. All of the participants were born in the United States, with parents born in Laos. The parents of 11 of the 14 women had never gone to college. The number of children in

participants' families ranged from 3 to 9 (*Mean* = 6.21). Six participants lived at home and commuted, the remaining eight participants lived away from home (See Table 1).

Data Collection

Gaining understanding of participants' lived experience is best accomplished through the use of in-depth narrative interviews. Through continuous dialogues, the goal of the interviews is to unassumingly guide the respondent to "the level of depth and detail" the researcher wants and expects (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.125). Interviews are neither objective nor subjective, but instead involve inter-subjective interactions between the researcher and participant (Kvale, 1996).

Interview procedures. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with these fourteen Hmong-American college women between June and October 2012 at a location selected by the participant, typically on the participant's campus, at her home, or in the researcher's office at the university. Participants were first informed of their rights, the procedures of the study, and possible risks and benefits of participation, concluding with obtaining their signature on a written consent form (See Appendix B). In addition, processual consent was interjected during the interview, asking participants if they wanted to continue or whether they were comfortable with the question, and giving them an opportunity to halt the interview or move to a new question.

An initial paper-and-pencil survey was administered prior to the narrative interview in order to obtain demographic data of the participants and their families (See Appendix C). All interviews were audio recorded. Participants were compensated \$20 for participating.

Interview protocol. This study explored independence and closeness and role and identity in parent-child relationships, which are central themes in the life world of Hmong American college women. The interviews were designed to elicit responses from participants that would describe and reflect the meanings of their parent-child relationships.

The main interview questions were open and expansive for the participants to recount in depth (Smith et al., 2009): how they felt about experiencing independence from parents; how they described their closeness to their mother and father; how they felt different from/close to their parents in terms of values, beliefs, perspective; how decision-making was done in different life areas (i.e., major/future career, living status, dating/courtship); how they perceived their communication with their mother and father; their experiences of carrying home responsibilities; their ideas of being a daughter; parental expectations; their ideas of dual cultural identity; the experience and meaning of being a college woman; their future life goals and living arrangements (See Appendix D for the complete interview protocol).

Analysis

The present study aimed to capture the essence of parent-child relationships in participants' lived experience. Verbatim interview transcripts were analyzed using Giorgi's phenomenological method (1985) which aims to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a human through the identification of essential themes. This study followed the following stages of analysis: Getting a sense of the whole, identifying meaning units, transforming the participants' expressions into abstract

language, and synthesizing transformed meaning units into a statement of the phenomenon.

Getting a sense of the whole. First I read the entire description of all transcripts in order to grasp a general sense of the whole statement (Giorgi, 1985). In this study, the data consisted of 352 pages of transcribed interview text.

The sense of the whole describes Hmong American college women's experiences of parent-child relationships. For example, all 14 Hmong American college women in the study gave very similar descriptions of their relationship with their parents. They said that their parents supported them in college, and that they felt good about being women in college.

Identifying meaning units. Second, having gained the essence of the whole, I went back to the beginning and carefully read through the text once more with the specific aim of discriminating "meaning units" [shifts in meaning as the researcher perceived] (See Appendix E for an extensive table of examples) and with the focus on the phenomenon being investigated (Giorgi, 1985). In this stage, the analysis was conducted by breaking down the whole text into manageable units. Once meaning units were delineated, I re-read them in their entirety to be able to perceive them more directly.

Transforming the participants' expressions into abstract language. Third, I transformed the everyday expressions into abstract language with an emphasis on the participants' experiences of being independent from as well as being connected/close to parents and their perceptions of role and identity. These experiences occur in both physical and psychological contexts. The transformations take place basically through a

process of reflection and imaginative variation (Giorgi, 1985). I aimed at the essence of the experience expressed by every unit with meaning and presented the variations/transformations as clearly as possible. I avoided any commitment to theoretical concepts but retained the interviewees' descriptions as much as possible in the analysis (Giorgi, 1985). In this stage, I grouped the relevant constituents based on their intertwining meanings and put them in a temporal order (i.e., being independent from parents, challenges to independence, being close to parents, challenges to closeness, identity negotiation, ambivalence) in a temporal order within the interview. Then I categorized these meaning units across participants (See Appendix E).

Synthesizing transformed meaning units into a statement of the phenomenon.

Last, I synthesized the insights contained in the transformed meaning units across participants into a coherent description of the phenomenon. The themes generated and a statement of the phenomenon are presented in the results chapter.

Trustworthiness

The author utilized several approaches to establish trustworthiness through the research process. First, I made explicit my personal experiences with the phenomenon under study to avoid being distracted from focusing on the participant's unique experiences (Creswell, 2007). Second, I valued rapport building with the participants. Third, purposeful selection was used to obtain adequate and rich data (Morse, 1986). Fourth, the reflective journal allowed me to respond to the emerging issues more

thoughtfully. Lastly, data verification ensured the validity of the data collection process and analysis.

The researcher's personal experiences. I have reflected on my parent-child relationship experiences both as a college-aged daughter who was away from home in Taiwan, and as a mother of two college-age daughters who currently commute to school, although my older daughter lived on campus for the first two years of her college life.

My parents were not college graduates, but they encouraged me to pursue higher education. Growing up in a culture with gender norms, my educational aspiration and good academic performance reinforced my parents' support that I should focus on school work instead of any household chores. They strongly believe in the value of education, considering it as the most powerful tool to achieve social mobility. I did not have a strong sense of psychological separation from my parents when I entered college, given the fact that I had already left home for high school in another city.

My two daughters go to two different colleges. The older daughter opted for a private liberal arts college which is 15 minutes away from home. During the years when she lived in the dorm, she maintained contact with us via phone calls, emails a few times a week, and came home during the weekend. She decided to move back home so that she can concentrate on pursuing her life goals with more emotional support from family. Her younger sister opted to stay at home to avoid an extremely busy campus schedule which her sister experienced during her freshman year.

Rapport building. It was important for me to build rapport with my interviewees in order to obtain credible information (Leininger, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow,

2005). Because this type of data collection is relational and requires prolonged engagement, some skills such as active listening helped me maintain trust with the participants (Morrow, 2005). My training as a marriage and family therapist helped me master these interpersonal skills. Throughout the interview process, I remained mindful of communicating to each participant that her stories and experiences were valuable and important. I did so by affirming participants' responses by nodding and asking follow-up questions.

As an immigrant Asian woman and non-Hmong myself, I maximized the advantages of both etic and emic perspectives (Sands & McClelland, 1994). The emic or "insider" perspective allowed me to more easily build rapport with these minority women than what might have been possible by a researcher from the mainstream culture. The etic or "outsider" perspective helped me avoid taking-for-granted the familiar in a specific ethnic or cultural group.

Reflective journal. I also kept a reflective journal which included the research schedule and methodological log and notes of my thoughts and speculations as researcher. This reflective journal served as a useful tool in dealing with emergent issues during the process and kept me aware of my research bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, I wrote down my notes regarding scheduling difficulties with Shoua (pseudonym): "Scheduling is challenging. Shoua told me to reschedule after I returned from Taiwan since she had a busy schedule when she had to help her parents move. After I returned she set up an appointment on Aug 6 but then she had to cancel due to her great

uncle's death and funeral." I finally interviewed her and was able to explore her most recent experience of family responsibility.

Data verification. I listened carefully and asked clarifying questions during the interviews. In the first stage of data analysis, I emailed the participants to clarify any confusion or request further explanation of a scenario. For example, Xia (pseudonym) mentioned that her senior year concerned her parents and they were worried about her not taking enough credits. In the interview she described "financial stuff." I emailed her to confirm if this concern referred to qualifying for scholarships. There also seemed to be conflicting information about freedom to attend activities. I sent my interpretations to verify that I had accurately captured her lived experience.

Finally, I emailed my first draft of results to all participants with a request to verify my analysis. I did not use their names, but rather assigned each participant a number and asked them to verify their quotes for accuracy. I also asked them to read the entire results section and give me feedback on whether or not I had adequately and correctly captured the essence of Hmong college women's experiences of the parent-child relationship. Twelve participants responded to my request and verified their parts as well as the overall themes presented.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality. In consideration of the characteristics of my research participants, I was aware that they belonged to a vulnerable immigrant and refugee population. Therefore, I was particularly careful to maintain the participants' anonymity and protect their confidentiality (Lipson, 1994). I have disguised the participants' identity

by using pseudonyms. I changed the names of their family members, hometown, and other identifiers as necessary. For example, I learned that one participant was concerned about potentially being identified after she read the first draft of my findings. As a result, I changed the descriptions of college major selections to be more general so that neither she or others could possibly be identified. This reassured her and she felt comfortable with remaining in the study.

Respect for human autonomy. Informed consent was presented to the potential participant prior to the interview. Consent was affirmed during the interview and again at the data analysis phase (Smith et al., 2009). Every participant was assured that she could skip any question if she didn't want to answer. When unexpected sensitive issues emerged, I asked the participant if she wished to continue.

Researcher-participant relationships. I made sure that the participant was clear about the researcher's role (e.g., not a counselor or therapist) (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). All participants remained open through the interview. I did not find any cultural factors that hindered the participants' openness (Lipson, 1994). For example, it has been suggested that some family issues are sensitive for Hmong households to keep as secrets from outside persons (Xiong, Tuicomepee, LaBlanc, & Rainey, 2006). However, this did not seem to be an issue; a few participants even shared some aspects about their father's polygamous relationships.

Beneficence. I was mindful that the interview might trigger painful memories and reassured participants that they did not have to answer questions if they did not feel

comfortable (Orb et al. 2001). None of the participants appeared emotionally disturbed during the interview.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study explored Hmong college women's experiences of parent-child relationships. The goal was to better understand their lived experiences of navigating the balance between independence and closeness as well as their perception of their role and identity in their relationships. Results highlight themes related to participants' parent-child relationships. At the conclusion of this chapter, a statement of the phenomenon is presented.

The Hmong college women were at the life stage when balancing autonomy and emotional closeness to their parents is a vital developmental task (Frank et al., 1990; Miller & Lane, 1991). All 14 of the college women in this study were born in the United States; their parents were all born in Laos. As second-generation immigrants, participants were strongly influenced by two cultures – Hmong and American during their formative years. Except for two participants whose fathers had graduated from college, participants were first-generation college students. All participants had to negotiate role expectations and multiple identities in their interactions with parents. Participant profiles are listed in Table 1.

Descriptions of the lives of Hmong college women in this study revealed three primary themes: 1) I am more independent, 2) I am closer to my parents, and 3) I am struggling to find a balance. Each primary theme was associated with specific domains in which they a) experienced more independence or autonomy, b) experienced more closeness or connection to their parents, and c) were struggling to find a balance. Lastly,

the statement of the phenomenon describes how they are achieving integration of Hmong-ness and American-ness in their role as daughters in most areas of their life.

For the sake of clarity, when referring to how many people spoke to particular ideas in the text, “a few” indicates two or three participants, “some” or “several” refers to four or five participants and “many” or the “majority” stands for six or more participants. Names of participants and their family members (i.e., sisters) are pseudonyms.

Theme 1: I am More Independent

This theme revealed that participants gained more independence from their parents since they entered college. The domains included decision making about education related or career choices, living on her own, financial independence, ideology differentiation, social independence, assuming parenting roles, reduction of familial role expectations, and remaining single. For certain participants, these areas were interrelated. For example, “living on her own” was related to gaining more social independence and reducing familial role expectations.

Decision-making about education-related or career choices. Many parents let participants choose the school and/or the major they liked, felt interested in, or what they considered the best fit. Although some took into account parents’ perspectives, they were still able to make decisions based on what they thought would help them achieve their educational goals and desired occupation. A few participants mentioned that even though their parents did not know much about the education system, they expected them to complete college and get a decent job.

Mai Yaj said her parents trusted her to make the best decision about school and major in the social science field. Houa's and Maiv's said that their parents just wanted the best for them. As the eldest child, Houa, was expected to be a role model for her younger siblings and shared that she had freedom to do what she wanted to do. Mai Tong's parents trusted her judgment in choosing her own major and future career.

Some participants mentioned that they sought other advice when making college-related decisions. Kia did her own research and relied on outside consultation. Mai Tong's learning abroad experiences and Asian American Studies courses helped her find her college major and minor.

Older siblings paved the way for a few participants who shared that this gave them more freedom to make their own educational choices. Cua felt good about following in her sister's footsteps. Likewise, Yi said that her father reminded her to consult her older sisters when making decisions about college .

Because they did well in college, my dad really pushed it and he always said "Look up to Mee (1st sister) and Hlee (2nd sister)." I look up to Mee and Hlee. You know they're gonna teach you how to get there because they blazed the trail so....But then my dad doesn't want us to just fill their shoes, my dad wants us to fill our own shoes. Yeah, but follow that path.

In contrast, a few participants had to convince their parents to accept their decisions, particularly their choice of majors.

When it comes to education then they're always, "Ok, if this benefits your education then go." But then my dad really wanted me to become a doctor, but

I'm a sociology major so it took a lot of like, I guess, forcing them to understand what sociology is and what I'm gonna do with that. (Nou)

Living on her own. The majority of participants experienced living away from home for anywhere from a few months to a couple of years. They considered this a crucial developmental landmark, mentioning how living on their own had allowed them to grow as adults. They expanded their self-exploration, learned how to cope with life, experienced things on their own, and accomplished more school work such as reading. Nou was able to “branch out to increase her mentality level and expand her mind.” She commented that the physical distance between home and school allowed her to be herself. Likewise, Cua described her experience of leaving home as follows:

So, in a way, being able to live on campus and going to school, miles away from home, has really helped me develop who I'm as a person and help me really mature and grow and be able to expand that horizon.

Youa emphasized that such freedom allowed her to fulfill “so many big dreams.” Shoua insisted that living away from home was her right. Her argument with her parents was that her mainstream peers all did that: “I'm like: ‘come on. I'm eighteen, you know. Most Americans are out there.’” Although Mai Tong lived at home during her college experience, she gained independence experience from traveling and interning out of state.

Financial independence. Some participants considered themselves relatively independent because they had worked part-time or got financial support elsewhere. For example, Cua and Paj felt independent because they had a job and were saving money. Cua also mentioned that obtaining college scholarships allowed her to be more

financially stable. Likewise, a few participants described how they could now deal with their own life such as taking care of their car and paying for gas and phone bills. Paj emphasized how she felt treated as an adult when her parents expected her to work.

They actually want me to work because I have a lot of bills, because I have car insurance, a phone bill, you know things like that. So they don't want to pay for me because they expect me to be an adult and I want to show them that I am responsible so they don't treat me like a kid so I have to work to pay for my bills. And so they don't mind at all, they actually like the fact that I go to school and I work because they can brag to other parents you know because most other students I find that: they don't work... And my parents love to brag that I'm hard working.

Ideology differentiation. Several participants described how opportunities in college contributed to their intellectual development and facilitated their differentiation from their parents. Some mentioned that their American identity drove them to think or act differently than their parents. A few participants resisted or expanded on what their parents expected of them to be successful. Others confirmed the beliefs they shared with their parents after they'd had a chance to explore things on their own. Several participants noted an ideology gap between themselves and their parents. For example, a few participants specifically mentioned that their parents do not accept homosexuality as they do. Gender role ideology was another area of disagreement. Nou credited her American identity for prompting her to think more deeply and reject gender inequality.

Two participants spoke specifically about rejecting their parents' nearly abusive parenting practices. It was interesting to hear that a few participants were able to discuss these types of issues with their parents as adults. For example, Shoua recounted that she talked with her mother about her siblings' conflicts: "And I finally just talked to my mom. I asked her what are you doing wrong, why are they (Shoua's siblings) like that? And she answered honestly and talked to me like an adult."

Pursuing a college major different than what their parents expected was a good example of how a few participants became more differentiated from their parents during their college years. Paj tried studying what her parents wanted her to, but discovered that nursing was not right for her. By switching her major from biology to sociology, Kia framed this as pursuing the desire to intellectually challenge herself. She was able to "stand up for myself a little" saying:

They all want me to become a doctor, like a surgeon or something because they want me to make a lot of money. And you know it's very like: a lot of Hmong people, their parents tell 'em that. I go to school and my college has lots of Hmong people. And every single one of them is Bio major and it's like everybody wants you to be a doctor, like: "Oh my god."... So I changed my major cuz I really like sociology and I'd rather understand things in a far more complex level.

Nou also opted out of what her dad wanted her to do for the future. Her statement reveals her resistance to her dad's idea of one path to success:

It's just like: "Okay, you want me to be a doctor but you know that's something that I'm not passionate about." So in a way making choices when it came to my

major, my school, I kind of chose what benefits me rather than what would benefit them. Cuz I kind of feel like: “You know even though I’m not gonna become a doctor or not gonna be in a profession that you want me to be, I will be successful somehow and you will be proud of me.” But I think that’s just not being not majoring in nursing is a drawback, that I kind of feel bad for my parents like: “I’m sorry that I can’t live up to your expectations in wanting your daughter to become a nursing student. I chose this path instead. But I’m sure one way or another one day you know you will see that this is a successful path rather than the one that you thought.”

Knowing that her parents were upset that she was not going to be a nurse or a doctor, Paj tried to talk her parents into accepting her choice and believing in her thoughtful plan. She reassured her parents by saying that she would work hard and it would be worth it in the end.

Perceiving her parents’ narrow range of career choices, Kia attempted to appease her parents after they knew she had switched her major:

They’re too scared. It’s either like all they see is two roads: you either work at McDonald’s or you be a doctor. They don’t see the in-between at all. They don’t know what exists so then because I don’t wanna be a doctor no more. They think I’m gonna end up working at a fast food restaurant and be poor, live on the street you know. They’re just really scared. And so that’s the only feedback I’ve been receiving and they threaten me a lot of disownment or like. I don’t know what else, really bad stuff. And they threaten me a lot because they’re just really scared

... then I kind of just tell them like my plan to let them calm down, like: “okay, I’ll be a professor you know something else good.”

Lias described how she initially incorporated her father’s expectation into her plans, but gradually reconstructed this identity in a more thoughtful way:

Um I think in the Hmong culture, I’m not sure about a lot of other cultures, but basically they make every decision for us almost. My dad wanted me to be a doctor. So in my life that was something that I strove for, was to be a doctor because that’s what my dad wanted me to be.... I’m a physiologist, a physiology major. But I plan to go into PA school afterwards. So it’s not quite a doctor but I also want to have a family and everything. So I think this route I kind of can please my father, at the same time do what I wanna do and still have a family when I grow up and still have a life outside of my job.

Nou’s occupational identity began to form during her internship at a social service that helped refugees. Nou felt passionate about pursuing this career because of her own family’s refugee journey. Although she did not opt for what her parents wanted her to do, she was glad that she was able to reflect on her parents’ experience when they arrived in America when she taught refugees.

As first-generation college students, some participants were becoming role models for their families and community. Youa wanted to be able to tell Hmong girls that there are many more things to explore rather than getting married at a young age. As the first person in her family to study abroad and do an internship out of state in her family, Mai Tong was a role model for her younger cousins. Xia was proud that she

avoided an early marriage as experienced by many of her same-age female relatives. Her refugee, immigrant, and educated woman identities motivated her to serve as a counselor and role model for immigrant youth from disadvantaged families.

Although she was not allowed to date boys from clans not approved by her parents, Paj felt happy with the person she was currently dating even though he was from an unapproved clan. Through navigating these decisions, most participants learned to think for themselves. Paj noted:

But now that I'm a lot older and I've been exposed to a lot more people, I've learned to become independent in my own thinking and so I learned how to measure what is right, what is not, what is okay, what is not okay so.

Additionally, becoming more differentiated does not necessarily mean holding different values or beliefs than parents. Bao and Houa felt motivated to explore their faith on a deeper level rather than passively following their parents' Christian beliefs.

Social independence. Some participants shared that they experienced fewer parental restrictions in their social life compared to their teen-age years, including driving independently, going places without asking parents, and not having a curfew. A few participants thought that they were allowed freedom due to their birth order status, having fewer restrictions than their older siblings. Kia attributed this increase in social freedom to the increased parental trust gained through hard work in school.

Like whenever I want to go out and play, like use the car to see my friend, again, you know I can just tell them like: " Oh, I've been studying so hard in school I haven't seen my friends in so long," which is sometimes true. You

know, like I live in a little box, I just study. So then they understand and they're just like: "okay, go ahead." And they don't yell at me. I come home late like midnight and they're just okay you're home, the end. You know they don't yell at me or anything.

Assuming parenting roles. A few participants articulated that they did not depend on their parents for most things, even though they described many cases in which parents supported them. Perhaps this conflicted perception is due to their experience of having to play adult roles in their family. Shoua's and Mai Tong's parents relied on them from early years to navigate American society such as translating. After moving out, it became especially apparent to Shoua that she had played a strong parental role in her family, particularly being asked to resolve younger sibling's conflicts. Lias shared: "I'm basically a mom too. Whenever my sister's hungry and she wants something from home as she calls it, she comes over and I make her something that my mom would make or something like that." Mai Tong described how she experienced this parental role:

I know that I have to do it myself. And so just doing it alone, I think, makes me really independent like I really don't need my parents for anything. Now I see it reversed like I, like I don't really need them anymore I just need them for like the financial support but they, they need me for like for everything, for like translating and for like...I don't know...mostly for translating (laughs).

Reduction of familial role expectations. Some participants experienced reduced familial role expectations and responsibilities. Their parents did not rely on them so much to do household chores, either because the family adjusted to their absence or their

parents wanted them to focus more on school work than housework. For example, Nou reflected that during high school, she helped her younger siblings with school needs, but leaving for college allowed her to be herself. If there was a need, however, Nou's father would have her brothers bring documents for her to look over. When she was home on breaks, Nou helped with family responsibilities. Youa expressed her appreciation for the freedom from reduced family responsibility:

If I always have to come home at a certain time, if, and it drives me nuts sometimes like coming home and then you have to do your homework but oh your family really needs you, you know like with cooking and all that stuff and it just really distracts you and it makes you, it makes it really hard to prioritize and to even question yourself like: "Okay, what's more important?" and so, yeah.

A few participants mentioned that their parents at times reminded them to focus on school work instead of doing household chores. Coming home during the breaks, Houa noted how her mother wanted her to just leave the dishes in the sink and do her homework although she did not mind doing the chores. By the same token, after Xia moved back home in her sophomore year she perceived that her parents lessened her household chores so that she could focus more on pursuing her career.

Although parents were eventually able to reduce their college-aged daughters' family responsibilities, it took years for them to accept that reality and support their child's needs. Cua described her experiences of responding to her mother's frustration:

Growing up she expected a lot out of me as a Hmong daughter. There is a lot of expectations as Hmong daughter in the Hmong culture. And so with my mom as I

entered college she started to have this frustration of why I wasn't coming home a lot, why I wasn't cooking at home, why I didn't want to come home, why I was always at school on campus, why I didn't call her? So, my mom got really frustrated with that at one point, I would probably say freshman sophomore year she got really frustrated with me. But, it was this whole notion of: I'm growing up and I'm living on campus and I'm doing own thing. So, I had to explain to my mom that I'm growing and I'm changing and that, yeah, I'm becoming more independent. And I'm learning things on my own.

Remaining single. Compared to Hmong girls who got married at a young age, several participants felt good about their choices to remain single in this stage. Xia felt that being single allowed her to figure out who she was and focus on pursuing what she wanted. Nou shared her feelings about her choice of education over marriage:

And I just kind of feel like: most Hmong daughters they tend to, you know, they tend to just escape things by turning to marriage; you know, escape their life by getting married at a young age, even some in the United States. And I always feel like that's not an option, that I have to overcome this in order to be who I am today so.

Theme 2: I am Closer to My Parents

Generally, this theme revealed participants' experiences of becoming psychologically closer to their parents as well as being more connected with their mother culture. The domains include developing psychological bonds, building more understanding, becoming more open in communication, relying on parents' support,

valuing what their parents value, and accepting some familial role expectations. It is worth noting that these domains are often interrelated.

Developing psychological bonds. Some participants described that the physical distance created by going to college in a different city actually drew them closer to their parents. Homesickness reminded them of what was good about home and what they missed about being close to their parents. Mai Yaj felt she was better able to show her affection to her parents after she left home for college. She recounted:

My closeness to my parents also has to do with my younger siblings. They're really open to my parents as well. They would give them a hug, a kiss. As an older sister, or, one of the older siblings, I'm like: "hmmm, I want to do that too." So I guess because of what they do, it makes me want to do it as well. So, that wasn't until we, I went to college though. So maybe that's another reason why I am closer to them. But when I was in high school, my siblings, they started giving my parents hug and kiss. Umm, but I would do it here and there, but then since I am home I don't really feel like I have to, since I see them like every day.

Building more understanding. The majority of participants described how "understanding" had driven them closer to their parents, both their understanding of their parents and their parents' understanding of them. Relationships improved when parents recognized their daughter's new identity as a college student and realized that she was growing up. Participants' own maturation process helped them better understand their parents. Mai Yaj said:

When I was younger, growing up, I felt like my mom always favored my older sister. So I would be very sad and I guess this is the reason why I wasn't as close to my mom when I was younger. But then when I got older, things just kinda changed. So I feel closer to my mom.

Closeness to parents also increased when college-aged daughters in this study developed more empathy for their parents' backgrounds, struggles, and sacrifices.

Psychological growth allowed participants to be more empathetic which in turn increased their acceptance of family responsibilities. Maiv described:

Yeah, in my household nowadays I don't hear that but I think maybe like when I was younger in middle school or in high school maybe um maybe that (gender roles) was used a lot more frequently. But I think now that I'm in college and uh, I'm more aware and, and exposed and knowing that you know it's not really gender roles. But it's, well it's, that's how I think that it's not really gender roles. It's just whether or not you're considerate.

Shoua expressed her better understanding of parents' concerns after she gained freedom during her college years:

Once I grew into that college stage, I understood my parents more. In high school, I just wanted to do things by myself and go out with my friends all the time. I wanted to have freedom and then in college when I did have freedom, I'm like, "Okay, I understand what my parents are coming from now" (laughs).

A few participants developed an increased understanding of their parents' limitations in certain areas. Acknowledging the impact of being refugee and immigrant

on their parents' worldviews allowed them to be more tolerant and respectful of their parents' opinion and needs. Yi noted "I think about um, how they were raised so differently from me and I wanna respect their choices and, and their decisions. So I would say that they, they are different in some, in some cases."

Shoua's undergraduate courses about immigrant families helped her gain a new understanding of how marriage at a very young age affected her mother's life. She described that this understanding was drawing them closer to each other and she now considered her mother her best friend:

Yeah, I think that's how my mom and I are closer now-- I give her a chance to understand me and, she gives me a chance to understand her. I can honestly say that my mom is my best friend, and I don't think I could ever say that when I was in high school.

Knowing her mother's financial struggles drew Mai Tong closer:

I do talk about everything with my mom actually. I talk about relationships too, I talk about boys, with her too. I think I'm more open to her now that I see... I kind of, I see her struggles like when I, cuz I started working...I started working pretty early when I was in high school. And then it wasn't 'til I got to college that I saw that, I saw like, I saw how financially like incapable my mom was.... so I think that really drew me to her and like she really inspires me to stay in school.

Other participants shared how their deepening understanding of their parents' lives and struggles changed the way they interacted with them. When her mother

expressed her regret over failing to provide much support for her education, Xia reassured her that she appreciated other ways her mother had supported her. Because Nou realized that her parents were behind in their language ability, she switched to provide support to her parents instead of helping her younger siblings.

In addition to understanding, some participants appreciated what parents had done for them by showing their willingness to support their well-being by listening to parents. This also motivated them to complete their education and get a good job.

Maiv and Yi emphasized that they were better able to respect their parents' opinions without confronting them if a disagreement or conflict arose.

I do consider my parents a lot, I, I always consider them a lot and I would say that my parents' happiness, you know if they're happy I'm happyIt's also vice versa. If I'm happy my parents are happy so as much as I consider my needs uh their needs, they consider mine so we meet in the middle I think. (Yi)

Paj's motivation to succeed was increased when she considered how mom had experienced marriage by capture, divorce, and subsequent rejection by her family. She became more attached to her family and wanted to live close to her parents in the future. The experience of racial discrimination and financial hardship allowed Yi's father to empathize when Yi had similar experiences and made a difficult decision.

Yeah I made this decision, um, kind of last minute. And I told my parents about it (transferring to another school). And they're, you know, I expected my dad to be angry. I expected my mom to be angry. I expected my dad to

be angry because I wanted to just walk away from all of this... I feel kind of, ... I guess, guilty because when I told them, they were just, they were so understanding. I told them, my dad, because he also just faced discrimination and he just walked out. I think he really sympathized with me when I told him about my situation.

There tended to be gender differences between closeness to the mother and to the father. The majority of women claimed that they felt emotionally closer to their mother than father because their mother was easier to relate to or to be more understanding than the father. For instance, Mai Tong felt she was closer to her mother father because her mom was more responsive to the children's instrumental needs such as clothing, traveling and other personal expenses. Bao felt closer to her mother just because her father tended to be emotionally reserved. On a deeper level, a few women such as Shoua and Paj empathized with their mothers' difficult experiences with marriages, as mentioned earlier. Paj described her mother as her "go to person":

I do go to my mom about dating. I do trust her a lot because my dad is her fourth husband so she's gone through a lot of divorces and so she wants me to have a life that is with just one man instead of um a life like hers where she had to go through a lot of problems and stuff. (Paj)

Becoming more open in communication. On a typical level, participants open communication with their parent(s) contributed to their close relationships.

Communication also became easier as these young women matured. Kia described the time when she interviewed her mother for her assignment in a women studies class:

So I did call her and I remember like just asking her: “Are you okay? Are you comfortable talking about this stuff with me now that we’re all adults?” And my mom she said like: “Ask me anything and I will just talk.” I was like: wow, I never knew she was that open.

Cua described that she and her mother became closer after she entered college, in the sense that they were able to talk about romantic relationships, family and “all the things that a mother and daughter would talk about.” Likewise, Maiv, Paj, Mai Tong, and Yi all described they could talk about everything with their mothers. That was why Maiv’s father wanted to have her mother talk to her about his concern regarding Maiv’s dating. Because her mother told her about her own challenges with marriage and divorce Paj trusted her mother and listened to her advice regarding marriage.

Although talking with their mothers was preferred, a few participants mentioned that they had made progress in the relationship with their fathers, particularly when it came to more intellectual topics such as education, sports, and politics. In establishing her new identity in education, Bao described how this evolved with her father:

I mean you definitely grow closer as the years go. And as you grow older, more mature, you learn to love them more, and you just think wiser, more differently. But I think overall it’s been the same with my mother but then I think like: with my dad, it’s gotten like better, not that it was never good, it’s just that especially with growing older, and transitioning into adulthood, and trying to discover who I am and like, what I want to do with my life, where to go, and career choices. Cuz he has always played a huge role in my education, just like encouragement and

just always reminding me that it's always important for, um just having successful life. So I think he plays a big role in like my determination and my academic endeavors and I think as I've gotten older I talk to him more.

After learning more about her father's stories, Mai Tong considered her father a role model that empowered her to intern out of state last summer. However, her father and mother were both open in sharing their war experiences although they shared them in different styles:

My dad is really open to telling his story, um, like no matter how sad or how hard it is. I think he tells it in a, in a very monotone voice and so I think that's why sometimes I get, it's you know it's sad but it doesn't make me cry. But when my mom talks cuz she's very emotional, when she talks and so I think when she tells her stories, it's like, it's more... I don't know. You get that feeling like you're not just like oh I'm not just listening I'm actually feeling it. Um but a lot of times they, they avoid a lot of the, the very, the brutal stuff. They talk, they talk, they try to, they try to um they tend to mention more humorous stuff like when they were, even when they were running in the jungles. My dad was like: "yeah, your mom was like, so bad at running through the jungle, she kept falling you know and my younger sister who was only seven years old was better than your mom." And so like they would talk about this stuff and they would laugh but then at the same time that situation is just so, it's so serious you know and they were like more scared of the soldiers than they were of like ghosts...

Relying on parents' support. Receiving parental support helped participants feel connected to their parents. Financial support was especially appreciated. For example, Maiv felt that she depended on parents a lot because she still lived with them and they paid for her insurance, gas, phone bills, etc. Mai Tong expressed that she wanted to pay her parents back by supporting them in the future. Mai Yaj felt close to her parents when they provided her rides between her college and home.

Parents' emotional and social support was also valued by participants. Even though Houa exercised her independence by choosing to attend college at quite a distance from home, she valued her parents' opinions about many other decisions:

Because I remember my mom and my dad didn't want me to go so far away but I wanted to go. And so I don't really, I don't really regret, I don't really regret completely because I do learn a lot too. But at the same time I also learn that my parents and the elders do have more experience. So in a sense they do know more, so whatever I do I should fully consider what they think before I make my decisions.

Words of encouragement or check-in calls were signs of close parent-child relationships. Even though their parents were not physically present to tell them what to do, they were psychologically connected to their parents. They talked about missing their parents (Mai Yaj and Shoua), needing support and care after a break-up with a boyfriend (Houa), and seeking "spiritual encouragement" from parents by phone or by coming back home (Mai Yaj). Parents' emotional support helped participants focus on achieving higher education and pursuing a decent career (Cua, Nou, and Youa).

Psychological support was also important for the few participants who lived at home. As Maiv described:

Yeah we usually, yeah it's actually pretty good because we call each other and check up and see where each other is at if it's like dangerous and if it's raining we will call each other and be like oh yeah be careful on the road um because it's raining really hard and just yeah I think our communication's good.

Valuing what parents value. Participants often described that shared values of family and education, or identities grounded in Hmong culture had drawn them closer to their parents. In their college experiences, many participants identified both academic and personal experiences that provided opportunities for them to reconsider and reevaluate their mother culture or reconnect with their Hmong identity. This process was facilitated by hanging out with other Hmong students (Cua, Shoua, and Mai Tong), attending Hmong or multicultural student organizations on campus (Mai Tong), taking Hmong language classes or Asian American studies (Maiv, Paj, and Mai Tong), or studying abroad and/or going out of state (Bao, Nou, and Mai Tong).

For many participants, being Hmong meant loving family. They credited their parents for instilling this value in them. Shoua said she started valuing her parents and developed pride in being Hmong after she entered college. Lias' response reflected what most of the women in this study described:

I think for Hmong people to come back home and be with their family is so nice and so refreshing and it's not something that the American

culture has now, is family like a union of families and like being centralized in your family. And, and so it's, it's nice to have that but also be independent I think.

Some participants emphasized how sibling relationships were extremely important to them. Cua's and Yi's parents always reminded the children to maintain close relationships with their siblings.

Expanding the notion of family, the close connections of parents and children also helped participants stay connected to their larger community. Bao said that attending the same church with her parents made her feel close to them.

Because of Lias' love for her family, she could overlook the limitations she perceived the Hmong culture imposed on her:

Well I think the culture and the limitations that comes with it and because we all love our families even though we don't agree with what they, they, some of the things that they want for us, we still love our families and that's a big part of being Hmong.

Shared values and beliefs that drew children to their parents were not limited to Hmong values. Participants articulated new beliefs and values that had been acquired from the American culture. For instance, several participants noted that sharing Christian values with their parents enhanced their closeness (Bao, Cua, and Mai Yaj) and increased the level of parent-child agreement (Houa and Lias);

The Hmong women in this study felt that their parents' strong value of education increased their support for their daughters' goals. Cua articulated what many participants experienced: "that's something my parents value lot and that something I have grown to

value the privilege of having education here in the United States.” Their families’ refugee immigrant experiences underscored the importance that education played for their future well-being. Bao connected these ideas:

I think they just want to see me be successful, just as a woman, and as a daughter, I think especially because of their history, of how they struggled to just have a successful life, because like having to involuntarily immigrate here, having to work their way to success in a different culture and environment, and a place that’s not their home, that’s why they stress so much on education, that’s important, like you educate yourself so that the people will have respect for you and so you can be successful, and have a successful life, not just have to struggle like we did and worry a lot.

The value of education was not only reflected in parents’ support for their daughters’ pursuit of their American dreams, it also impacted parents’ family role expectations for their daughters. Nou described:

Well my parents have said that, “you know because we’ve raised you to be an educational woman, you know, because you’re very educational.”... because they’ve helped, supported me throughout my way, that by eloping, by just running away with my boyfriend and having a messenger come is just kind of very disrespectful. So they kind of told me that: if I was to get married, make sure he comes over to my house and asks for my hand in marriage, because they did not support me all the way until college just to have me run away. Cuz that’s kind of like a slap in their face. So I always believe that if I was to get married, that my

husband should be the one coming to my house asking for my hand in marriage, rather than have me like run off to his house and send a messenger over.

Accepting some familial role expectations. Traditional values remained strong for some participants in this study, especially related to their parents' expectations of what a daughter should do in the family. Paj chose to stay at home during her college years for financial reasons but also because of her desire to stay at home until she married. Comparing herself with girls who opted to live away from their parents "so they can just party or do whatever they want", Paj felt that living at home would increase her parents' pride in her and other people would view her as a disciplined or good person.

Almost every participant's parents expected her to marry a Hmong man. Some agreed with their parents' expectations, considering it a way to affirm their Hmong identity. According to Bao, "culturally it's easier because then the man will have the same cultural values." Likewise, Mai Tong embraced intra-ethnic marriage as a way to avoid a cultural gap:

I feel like I want to be with a Hmong man just because I don't have to go through all the cultural differences. Like I wouldn't have to learn about a new culture or he wouldn't have to learn about a new culture.

Another area in which the women in this study accepted their familial role expectations was providing assistance. Although she moved away from home for college, Shoua remained available to her parents if needed:

My mom and I are really close because my sisters aren't there for her. So she asks me to, you know write out her bills or she asks me to do this, do that, help her

with paperwork, help her find a job... so that would be me, me, me, me, me (laughs).

Although a few participants perceived that a culture gap existed, they felt connected to their parents as well as to the Hmong culture through fulfilling family responsibilities. Cua said:

Then enforcing those house expectations and house chores on us that really helped us retain our Hmong culture because that is valuable in Hmong culture is to, especially for a Hmong women, in the Hmong culture is to value what to be, how to be a good housewife and how to be a good daughter in law when you get married.

Likewise, Shoua started appreciating how her parents had raised her in the Hmong traditions and values:

I feel like since I was raised in a Hmong family, it is my obligation to follow Hmong manners (laughs). Every time people come in, I have to greet them and cater to them. I don't know that's just how I was raised and I've become closer to my parents because I realized that, oh, you taught me this, so thank you for teaching me.

Theme 3: I am Struggling to Balance

Descriptions of the lives of the 14 Hmong college-age women in this study revealed areas in which several of them experienced challenges or confusion. They questioned their value or fit in their families and communities. Three primary challenges in negotiating their role and identities included parents' excessive emphasis on the "good

daughter-in-law” image, parents’ son-favoritism, and participants’ own ambivalence about role expectations.

Excessive emphasis on the “good daughter-in-law” image. Several participants felt that their parents emphasized the importance of upholding a good reputation in the community in order to project a “good daughter-in-law” image. This was emphasized to such an extreme that they felt their well-being was not taken into consideration. Some of these American-raised women clashed with their parents when they were required to act, speak and look like a traditional ideal Hmong woman.

Mai Tong remembered her mom reminding her to consider what a good daughter-in-law would be like and how to please her future in-laws. She described this pressure:

So I was like twelve years old and my mom would be like: “Oh yeah, come do this.” And I’m like: “Oh no, I don’t wanna do it.” And she’s like: “If you don’t do it, you know you’ll never know how to be a daughter-in-law...you’ll never be a good daughter-in-law and your mother-in-law will just send you back to us.”

...But it’s so different in America. I feel that I don’t wanna fit that box anymore that I want to be like: if I were to be like a housewife, actually I don’t wanna be a housewife. I don’t wanna cuz I don’t plan to work at home, actually I don’t know what housewives are (laughs). But I mean I, I don’t plan to fit, I don’t wanna fit in that box.

Parental control over appearance and clothing was noted by Cua, Nou and Paj.

Paj perceived that her parents’ expectations especially focused on making her

marriageable in the Hmong community. She described how her parents constantly commented on her figure, image, and personality:

I work so much and so my mom tells me every day, “you need to get bigger because I don’t like you being skinny, cause if you’re too skinny, you’re not pretty.” Or, “you’re skin needs to be lighter because if you’re too dark you’re not pretty.” Or, cause I had, I used to, I like to color my hair a lot and sometimes I go red and brown and stuff like that, recently I just went back to black but my parents just like black hair so they always say like: “ if you don’t have black hair, you’re not pretty.” Or, I’m very short too. So they would say things like: “If you’re not taller, you’re not pretty.” A lot of it is image and beauty because my parents want me to be very, very beautiful. Um but then a lot of it is: you have to learn to cook everything, you have to learn to clean everything, you have to learn all kinds of Hmong traditions like proverbs, games, history, folk songs, folk tales, things like that. They want me to be just the idea of perfect you know, perfection. So that’s what they believe is a good daughter and they, I, for me I have a very short temper so I always, if I don’t, if I hear something I don’t like, I always argue with someone you know or I tend to speak my opinion. And so they always tell me: “you shouldn’t do that because if you’re going to be so hot tempered then nobody’s going to want to be with you.” ...They say like I’m too stubborn and things like that too. You know, and most potential mother-in-laws and father-in-laws, they don’t want their son marrying someone who’s like that. But I always tell them like: “Well, I was born this way,” you know (laughs).

Participants described ways in which they pushed back from what they perceived as their parents' excessive concern or restrictions. Xia described her reaction to her parents' objection to her participation in sports:

I was playing flag football for four years and they're really like that's a very dangerous sport. And I understand that they care a lot but they're just kind of the focus where you, you should focus on school and you should stay home and do chores. I'm just like you know I can do this too while I'm doing chores and going to school, and just like something to keep me active and keep me interested.

Participants also struggled with their parents' views on friendships. They talked about being discouraged from making friends with people of different races or cultural backgrounds. Cua described this struggle and her reaction to it: "My parents had always been like: 'don't make friends with people who are other races because they are not like you.' Whereas me, I'm the person who is all about being friends with everyone." Kia challenged her mom to think differently:

One time she called me and I was with my friend who's black and he was walking me home. And then I was telling her about that...Then she's like: 'Why aren't you scared? He's black, he might do something to you,' and, 'what if people see you together?' I'm like: 'well, what does it say about those people you know, why are they so quick to judge, why, do they think so cruelly about someone just because he's black. You know why? So it made her think different. She's not so cared or caught up with the idea that your reputation is gonna be ruined. She thinks more about... I don't know, she thinks different now.

Another area in which these women struggled to find balance between parents' expectations and personal goals was related to their social lives. Nou perceived that parental restriction on her social life was associated with their shame-based culture. She recounted an episode when she just wanted to go out to help her friend take photographs and her parents misunderstood her:

And then when you tell them you wanna go hang out with them, even if it's for a good purposes, they automatically assume that 'Oh, you're gonna go like drink and go party.' And so my mom is like: 'No, you can't go cuz it's gonna reflect on your parents. You know, your reputation. And it's just like reputation, reputation. And then there's just a clear misunderstanding because I told my parents like how come you guys are not allowing me to go because you think that whatever I do is gonna affect you guys? But it's nothing bad. How's it gonna affect you guys?

Paj expressed her distress to her father and asked him to reduce his restriction because she had proven herself to be a decent and responsible person. She said:

I remember crying to my dad and I told him that they need to be less strict on me because it's a lot of pressure. I told him: "I go to school, I have a job, I help out in the community...." things like that. And I told him: "I'm not a bad person." Well, what I mean 'bad', I meant like most, a lot of Hmong girls, they run away when they're fifteen, sixteen. They get married, they have kids or things like that you know and I told him like: "I haven't done that... I haven't made you lose face or made you embarrassed to the community... I am doing something that you should be proud of. So I told him, "you should be less strict on me because I'm not going

to let you down.” So I think he kind of loosened up a little bit after that but my parents are still very strict too.

Maiv’s dad’s strict rules about dating constrained her relationship with him. She described a time when her dad was mad because she was in her room with her boyfriend:

He doesn’t yell at me and so he yells at my mom and tells my mom to take care of his daughter...my mom was telling me how my dad was saying: “...you don’t teach your daughter how to be a good daughter. Why’s she doing this and taking her boyfriend up to her room?”

Frustration was especially evident when some participants perceived that their parents’ restrictions were only imposed on them but not on their brothers. Houa’s parent allowed their sons to go out with their girlfriends but did not allow her to do so with her male friends. She thought her parents were afraid of the disgrace it might bring to them if people in the community felt that she was going out with boys too much. Maiv described this double standard:

When my brother goes and visits his girlfriend, my parents are okay with it. But when I go visit my boyfriend, they’re like: “Stop going to his house. That’s not ladylike. He’s supposed to come visit you.” So yeah, they do have different expectations for girls and guys.

A few participants mentioned that their parents’ non-negotiable attitude toward the ethnicity of their future husband had constrained parent-child relationships. Mai Tong commented: “ they’ll be like: ‘If you date another..., if you marry another race, I’m

gonna kill myself.’” She felt it was demoralizing when her mom told her that they would not make her wedding a big deal if she married a non-Hmong man.

Currently dating non-Hmong men, Kia and Shoua felt they had to hide that fact for a while to avoid parent-child conflict. Knowing that her parents were afraid that her reputation might be ruined if she married a non-Hmong person, Shoua delayed telling her mother about her boyfriend until her mother wanted her to meet some Hmong boys.

When her mother found out, Shoua told her that she was just dating him for fun, not for marriage. Kia described how she tried to change her parents’ views:

Actually I’ve been working on that a lot this year. Well, I’ve actually been, I’ve been talking to my mom a lot. I’m asking her questions like: “What if I date a white guy, what if I date black, what if I dated this... what if ...?” ... And her idea, her mind has changed a lot, she’s become more understanding and open-minded throughout the years... I tell her of what I see at school, like: “Ma, Hmong guys at my school I don’t really see them. As I think they’re lazy cuz whenever they don’t study. Whenever they don’t have class, they just go play video games on the computer.” And I tell her about all that stuff, like all I’ve seen, and then I say like: “oh, I don’t think I wanna date them. You guys always tell me to wait ‘til college to date but I am, I’m in college and I see them and I don’t like that and you know.” So I was like: “what if I dated a white guy instead, who’s really like smart and this, and this, and this...” And then my mom she kind of said : “Well, first you have to look at all the Hmong guys. If they’re not good then okay, then you can date somebody as long as they’re nice and smart and, and inspire you and

help you then that's really good. So I make her focus more on like the personalities and the other things rather than just the skin or the culture. She has become more open-minded with that.

Shoua reminded her parents of the limited availability of Hmong men who met their expectations for her future husband:

They would be like, "Oh, find a Hmong man who's very, very educated---PhD educated." Also, with my parents' age difference, they wanted me to find a man who's much older too because they think if they're much older, they're more wise. They'll have money and take care of you. That's their expectations but I don't know if it's changed. It's always. "Go find a really high-educated Hmong man and I'm always telling them, "Mom, there aren't any.... because a lot of them don't continue their education."

In addition to the excessive emphasis of the "good daughter-in-law" image and unrealistic expectations for mate-selection, another challenge was Hmong American girls' struggle for equality in couple relationships and balance in family roles. Nou described this struggle:

It's actually very hard cuz I feel like being a daughter you're supposed to be very submissive, you know very sweet, very like kind and very gentle, but for being Hmong American I kind of feel like I'm very rough, and very upfront, and I'm very I guess I speak my mind too... I think growing up I always saw my dad having control over my mom, you know. Like my mom always, I guess, giving in to anything that he wants and that their relationship wasn't as equal. So therefore

that plays an important role in like what I want you know. So I always have to make sure that I'm equal to my partner, or else if not equal then make sure I'm higher. I think I kind of have that dominance, feeling like I can't let him dominate me so I have to dominate him so that he can never dominate me. But I think that's a really bad mindset. But I think it's because I've been influenced or by my parents, because my parents, my dad has done that to my mom and so I don't want to be in the position of my mom. So then I have to make sure that I'm higher than that.

Parents' strictness made Nou imagine that it would be harder to be a daughter in the United States than in Laos. Perceiving herself as an independent woman, Nou followed her dad's rules when she came back home because it was under his roof. But she felt torn between the two worlds in which she was living:

So in a way I still value the values that they put on Hmong daughters, but yet I kind of feel like: sometimes it's very confusing cuz you know here I am like both of my feet are planted in two different worlds, you know, like American and Hmong, and you can't find that balance. And for me, I've been struggling with that throughout college too.

Son-favoritism. A few felt marginalized in their family and community just because they were women. They felt they were not valued as much as their brothers. Paj felt the value of the son was due to the fact that sons would carry on her father's clan/last name. Cua was bothered by the whole idea of being a Hmong daughter when growing up because she felt her brothers were treated as kings whereas she and her sisters were

servants. Shoua linked the tense relationship with her dad to his son-preference. She described an episode when her elderly father was hospitalized; he was only concerned with her brothers' presence. She said, "So then when he was sick I would go visit him and he'd be like I don't wanna see you, I only wanna see my sons."

These young women also perceived family and community skepticism about women's ability to achieve college degrees and have careers. Shoua's parents told relatives that she would never achieve a college degree. Paj felt that her opinions were not taken seriously by male figures in the Hmong community. Mai Tong felt she was not acknowledged by her parents, even though she had done so much:

I think that we, mostly the gender roles in the house, like I'm still expected to cook, to clean, to be a good daughter... Um it's still, in a sense like, when we go to family gatherings I'm not introduced. And so I'm like: "Wait, mom how come I'm not introduced to this uncle, this auntie?" You know, and my mom's like: "Oh well, he knows your brother." But I'm like: "What I mean like he doesn't know me, but I want to know him you know." And so, also my dad too, like my dad will be like: "Oh yeah, this is my son, this is this and that..." And so I feel like we don't share the value of introducing your children equally to their relatives (laughs). And so sometimes I feel like I don't even exist in my family, in my larger Hmong clan.

This feeling of being under-valued as a woman in Hmong culture was a barrier for these Hmong women. Although they were striving to become a successful woman in mainstream society, they were expected to be working to meet parents' expectation of a

good daughter-in-law to be. At times these two goals were in competition. Nonetheless, participants in this study were trying to balance the two.

Ambivalence in role expectations. Mate-selection or marriage was the most unsettled area for some. Nou got caught between following her own desires and adopting her parents' suggestions:

If I go with what they want, what if in the long run things don't work out and I'm not happy? And if I go with what I want then what if things don't work out, then they're gonna be like: "Oh I told you so," you know. So in a way it's kind of like: I don't know it's just really, it's just really hard to find a distinct medium.

Saying that "the more I'm educated, the more I think to myself that marriage isn't everything," she started to feel like not wanting to marry at all. She said, "I just want to grow old with my parents." In part, this was influenced by her understanding that once she passed age 25, she would not be so marriageable in her community. Cua received mixed messages from her parents:

Because when I was in middle school high school they were like: "No, you can't have a boyfriend." And once I was a freshman, sophomore in college, they are like: "Why don't you have a boyfriend yet? What if you become a 35 year old Hmong daughter who doesn't have a husband? We don't want you to live with us forever; you need to go start a life." And then nowadays though I think their mindset has changed again a little bit, along the way it has been changing.

Mai Tong felt pressure from her mother to learn how to do traditional Hmong tasks so that she would be marriageable:

My mom's like: "You know you can't cook chicken you should not marry." Like: "If you can't kill a chicken you should not get married. Cuz your mother-in-law is gonna want to eat these chickens. She's not gonna want to eat the chicken at Cub Foods. She's gonna want the real stuff and you take out the feathers."...so when I think about that it really like: 'I'm just like man, you know.' (laughs)... I'm really bothered by this and it sometimes, I guess in a way sometimes it discourages me from wanting to marry Hmong men in general.

Kia perceived that her parents' unrealistic expectation about her career choice arose due to their fear of poverty. Because her parents were "just on survival mode here in the U. S." they wanted to make sure she would get a good paying job "because they're living on the edge." Her refugee status initially motivated her to study hard, but now she said that she was losing hope and was burdened by the thought of being stuck in poverty forever. She felt pressured to assure her parents that she could have a decent career:

I feel like it takes away from them understanding my reality. And I think it feels unreal to me that they want me to have a plan and idea, cuz it's so weird. When I go to school and I talk with friends who are from white families and I say "Oh, what are you gonna do with your major?" They just say, "I don't know yet." You know, and that's perfectly fine to them, like their parents say like: "Oh, that's perfectly fine you don't know yet." I was like that too. When I was young, I didn't know yet and just comes to you, you know. And so when I say, "I don't know" to my parents, it's like: "Really bad" and I was like: "Wow...that's not work", you know. So I feel a lot of pressure because I can't, it's hard to make

promises. I don't like to make promises that are not gonna be complete, concrete or whatever so. But I do understand they need to know something and so yeah. I do find it interesting to become a professor too though, but I'm just scared like if it'll ever happen so. But I just tell them like: "Yeah, okay, work towards that."

Nou and Shoua both expressed their confusion in carrying out their family obligations with regard to future support. Nou felt that if she focused on meeting her needs rather than on her parents, she would be betraying them. Therefore, she regularly reassured her parents that even if she lived in her own house, she would never forget about their needs. She expressed that if she was giving in to all of their wants right now and was ignoring what she wanted, she might regret doing so sooner or later.

Shoua's parents expected her to get a good job and buy a house so that they could live with her. She was struggling between making them happy or living her own life. She was somewhat overwhelmed by this expectation thinking that caring for aging parents should be her brother's obligation. Besides, she was afraid that this burden might hinder her career:

I feel a lot of pressure actually, especially trying to make them happy. My dad is getting so old that he would never go to an old folk's home. He'd expect us to have him live with us until he passes away. I'm thinking: I don't know if I would ever want to be his primary caregiver, not that I wouldn't love him, but that would be a lot of hard work. That's what I'm kind of worried about. I don't want them to have so much expectation of me that I won't be able to do or go on with my own career or life.

A Statement of the Phenomenon

The emerging developmental task for college-age Hmong American women is to successfully negotiate roles and identities while balancing both cultures.

Generally, these women are learning to integrate two cultures to expand the traditional notions of being a good daughter to that of being an honorable successful woman.

This honorable successful woman identity allows them to be a role model to their other siblings or community youth. It embraces the some gender role expectations that fit for them. Shoua was proud of being Hmong because it had prepared her to be skillful in household chores and hosting guests, something she didn't see developed in her American roommates. For Lias, a balanced Hmong American woman meant that she was able to pursue independence while incorporating cultural traditions such as Hmong cooking and history. In other words, a successful Hmong American woman should be able to balance her career and family obligations to please her parents and in-laws. She described it this way:

My parents are really proud of me. They always told me that I was the one who set the bar and I'm always the one who sets the bar. They're really proud of me in that I can still do a lot but still be a good daughter and still learn the cultural aspects of the life that I need to learn.

Cua arrived at her balanced approach by expanding the idea of being a good daughter to being a good woman who contributes to society by way of her job. This allowed her to integrate her education and career goals with important family and cultural roles. Houa expected to obtain a high paying job to help her husband in the future. The goal of

becoming a good daughter-in-law for her was no more than being a good person for the world and serving in the community. She said:

Yeah like they, it's, it's not too uncommon in Hmong society but I'm for sure my family like they tell us, it's like okay I'm Hmong, when they first started talking about it I was probably like in middle school or high school right, it's like I'm not even close to getting married yet, but I think they've always had this mentality where they, they, they are, they need to prepare the girls because they know that that's someday that we're gonna go. And so they, they talked a little bit about it too, they'll mention it here and there like by saying things like you should wake up earlier and take, you know, that's what an honorable daughter in law would do, like a good one would do. And a good person, I think a good person does so much more than that. They, they would serve in the community.”

A good daughter for these Hmong-American college women is to be successful in achieving a high education that leads to a decent career and at the same time preserve the cultural legacy to honor parents in dealing with the outside world and domestic arena. As Cua described:

Good daughter to me is someone who holds a balance being a good daughter at home, but also just being a good daughter in terms of being independent, being at identifying your own goals and achievement in life in terms of where you want to go. And having a clear mindset of what you want to do in life. But, in terms of being at home, yeah, being a good daughter is someone who listens to the parents, who is obedient yet can challenge the parent's way of thinking but, yeah, and is

also respectful of themselves, of their parents and of elders and others. And yeah, really having, making sure that people perceive you respectfully.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Hmong American college women to gain an in-depth understanding of their relationships with their parents. The research, guided by symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993), explored the meaning of separation or independence from and connectedness or closeness to parents, focusing specifically on the meanings attached to roles and identities as revealed through their descriptions of their interactions with their parents. The study addressed two questions: “What are Hmong American college women’s experiences of being independent from and close/connected to their parents?” and “How do they perceive their role and identity in their interactions with parents?”

Overall, participants in this study were similar to most young adults who become more differentiated from their parents and gain more autonomy during the emerging adulthood stage of development (Arnett, 2000). The women in this study also described how they had become much closer and more connected to their parents compared to their teen years. This could perhaps be better described as interdependence, which has both independent and collective meanings.

The Hmong American college women in this study described how their roles and identities were being thoughtfully negotiated within their sociocultural contexts. Generally, they felt supported by their parents as they established an identity that included “educated woman.” However, there were areas in which these Hmong college women continued to negotiate with their parents, particularly related to women’s role

expectations that are unique to their Hmong culture. For these women, integrating Hmong and American cultural worlds was a critical developmental task to accomplish.

Following is a discussion of several aspects of their lived experiences that revealed unique meanings related to this emerging interdependent relationship with their parents, influenced by their socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Decision-making Experiences

The lived experiences of these fourteen Hmong American college women's parent-child relationships revealed that independence/separation from parents was often intertwined with closeness/connectedness to parents. The study discovered some important meanings connected to independent decision-making that were perhaps different than what might be common for young adults from mainstream American culture.

Arnett (2000) characterizes emerging adulthood, the stage of the Hmong women in this study, as accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and achieving financial independence. The women in this study described how they had become relatively differentiated from their parents' ideology. However, this differentiation was different than what might be found in mainstream culture; it involved a more collective perspective in which parents' opinions, expectations, and family needs were often considered in tandem with their own ideas and goals. Following are examples that illustrate the complexity of this development process for Hmong young adult women.

Romantic relationships and the postponed marriage. Compared to their mother's generation, all of these Hmong American college women chose to postpone marriage and complete their higher education. Many participants addressed the issue of developing romantic relationships as it was pertinent to the timing of marriage. Those who had been or were currently involved in romantic relationships tended to consider their parents' expectations for finding a partner of Hmong ethnicity in order to perpetuate their mother culture.

The development of romantic relationships has been identified as a vital task in a typical young adult's identity process (Arnett, 2000). However, the emerging adulthood literature suggests that this phase of development allows young adults to delay taking on adult roles when they postpone marriage and parenthood (Arnett, 1998 & 2000; Cohen et al., 2003). The assumption is that the taking on of adult roles is intricately connected to marriage and parenthood. This does not neatly apply to many of these Hmong college women who have been prepared for adult roles, specifically the responsibilities of wife and mother, since a young age. Contrarily, some Hmong parents actually discourage the development of romantic relationships through their restrictions on dating during this stage of their daughters' lives. In this situation, parents' concerns were twofold: dating leads to marriage which may cause the disruption of education and career development, and dating can risk ruining the reputation of the girl and her family.

For the Hmong women in this study, postponing marriage to complete a college degree most likely had additional symbolic meaning than what might be typical for emerging adults in the mainstream culture. The choice they made to not marry at a

young age was one that was virtually non-existent in their mothers' generation. They had to overcome cultural traditions of "kidnap" and teen marriage that are still common in Hmong communities (Julian, 2004). Generally, participants in this study felt privileged to have the opportunity to develop into educated women. They enjoyed many opportunities to explore their identity while pursuing higher education.

Major or career selection. Career decisions were also described by participants in this study, reflecting another critical developmental task during this stage of life (Arnett, 2000; Marcia, 1966; Toder & Marcia, 1973). The lived experiences of these Hmong women confirmed that they were addressing this task, but also revealed its complexity in light of their cultural and socio-economic contexts.

A dimension that contributed to that complexity was that parents did not have experience in or knowledge about either the U.S. educational system or career options open to these young women. Parents' primary focus was for their daughters to complete college and get a decent job. These students had substantial autonomy in choosing their major but they also considered their parents' expectations. They demonstrated thoughtful negotiation of both their own perspectives and those of their parents over time. Several students' parents wanted their daughters to be doctors or nurses, familiar careers in which they could make a decent income. They recognized that parent's suggestions to pursue medical fields were driven both by their limited knowledge of the breadth of possible careers and their desire for their daughter's future economic security. A few students followed their parents' preferences initially but later changed majors from a medically-focused field to a social science field. They changed their major not only based on their

academic experiences (Syed, 2010), but also following their passion for serving people in their community. The latter aspect was strongly linked to their immigration background. They assured their parents of their commitment to complete college and get a decent job so that their parents would still be honored.

The findings of the present study support Syed's (2010) assertion that students' choice of major/career concurs with "how they weave their multiple identities over time" (p.1600). Furthermore, these Hmong American college women's experiences captured the dynamic process of negotiating personal goals (i.e., interests, strengths, passions) and parents' expectations (i.e., reputation, good income). It is noteworthy that participants were proactive in helping their parents believe in their commitment to achieve success.

Residential status. Overall, leaving home experiences were associated with more freedom, less restrictive parenting, and reduced family responsibility for many Hmong women in the study. Many parents supported their daughter's move to campus or off-campus housing, understanding that this was important for her to achieve her educational goals. For others, living arrangements were dynamic through the college years. They either lived at home first and then moved out for a more flexible schedule or more freedom, or lived on campus first and then moved back home for a financial or family reasons. It is worth noting that several women found a compromise; they chose to go to a college in their home city, but lived away from home. This allowed them to provide important assistance to their parents when needed.

Several studies have found that independent living arrangements play a vital role in establishing the college students' independence or fostering individuation (Arnett,

1998; Berman & Sperling, 1991; Flanagan et al., 1993; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994; Miller & Lane, 1991). Living away from home allows young adults to experience more freedom from parental monitoring. However, living arrangements for the Hmong college women in this study were more complex. They were required to negotiate competing goals – educational, financial, familial, and personal. For some, it took time for parents to accept their daughter’s need to live away from home in order to focus more fully on their academic goals.

Identity Negotiation Persists in Parent-Child Interactions

The Hmong American college women’s lived experiences revealed that they are continually negotiating role expectations and identities in their relationships with parents, while striving to complete their educational goals and fulfill their family obligations. As symbolic interactionists suggest, a developed identity motivates one to behave toward others (Blumer, 1969; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). This section discusses how these Hmong American college women’s identity negotiation makes interactions with parents quite complex. In doing this, the present study lends evidence that suggests it might be necessary to reconsider or expand some concepts of identity negotiation that currently exist in the scholarly literature.

Growing “Hmong-ness”. The majority of these Hmong American college women experienced improvement in their relationship with parents and started to appreciate their culture during this stage. Though the direction of influence is not clear, increased emotional closeness was connected to these women’s embracing of their ethnic identity. They were able to articulate how they had begun to more closely identify with

their parents' values. They showed more empathy for their parents' backgrounds, especially recognizing and appreciating the sacrifices their parents had made. This facilitated communication, especially with their mothers, and motivated them to work on their interactions with their parents. Their connectedness to parents was reflected in their consideration of and willingness to help with family needs. The findings of this study confirmed the role families play in establishing ethnic identity from youth to adulthood (Juang & Syed, 2010; Syed, 2010; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006).

Reconsideration of acculturation difference and parent-child conflict.

Findings from the current study suggest a slight deviation from assertions made by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) who suggested that "acculturation weakens these family values and leads toward more individual-centered orientations" (p.202). It has been suggested that due to restrictive parenting, daughters of immigrant parents are more likely than sons to experience conflictive relationships with their parents resulting in daughters' growing desire for independence in their transition to adulthood (Rumbaut, 2000). Like many studies on immigrant families with children born or raised in the U.S. (Chung, 2001; Lee & Liu, 2001; Lee et al., 2009; Su et al., 2005), the majority of participants in this study noted the acculturation gap between their parents and themselves. Compared to their earlier years, these Hmong college women had learned over time to embrace acculturation differences with more empathy. This may provide insight to understanding why the Hmong American college students' study could not find a significantly higher level of parent-child conflict among women than men as expected (Lee et al., 2009). Most participants in the present study had become more tolerant of disagreements with

their parents than in their teen years, although none of these fourteen women appeared to belong to the group who are more likely to experience parent-child conflicts owing to the child's behavioral problems and school difficulties as a Hmong youth study suggests (Xiong & Huang, 2011). Study participants reported that they had also learned to reframe their parents' behavior, for example, by interpreting restrictive parenting practices as caring. They also used strategies such as not sharing information with their parents to avoid conflict. Some women attempted to change their parents' minds, especially their mothers, because she was often easier to relate to than their fathers.

An area of unresolved challenge for some of these young women was their experience of marginalization or gender inequality in the family or community. Even though all these Hmong college women were not considering marriage to escape strict parental control (Ngo, 2002), their parents' seemingly excessive emphasis on reputation or images of good-daughter/daughter-in-law rather than on their daughters' well-being was still constraining optimal parent-child relationships.

Expanded family obligations. The present study demonstrated that Hmong college women strive more for *interdependence with* than *independence from* their families, balancing their own needs with the needs of their families. To varying degrees, this study confirmed ideas suggested by previous studies that found evidence that Hmong young adults provide assistance to parents (i.e., household chores, translating), maintain family connectedness, respect elders, and desire to live close to their families in the future (Fuligni et al., 1999, as cited in Tseng, 2004; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Maramba, 2008; Ong et al., 2006; Sy, 2006; Tseng, 2004). Family obligation was also demonstrated in the

present study through participants' obvious loyalty to siblings, respect for older siblings and role-modeling for younger ones.

Participants further demonstrated their goal of interdependence by their desire to give back to their families. This supports previous research that has found that family interdependence may motivate minority children to persist in higher education (Ong et al., 2006; Phinney et al., 2005; Sy, 2006; Tseng, 2004).

However, family obligations for the women in this study were fulfilled by going beyond obeying parents' rules, a subtle difference in the primary indicator suggested by other immigrant youth research (Lee, 2005). Because they perceived themselves to be in a more equal position with their parents, it was not uncommon for them to attempt to educate or broaden their parents' perspectives.

Implications for Future Research

There exists scarce scholarly research on the parent-child relationships of Hmong American young adults. By focusing on Hmong college women's relationships with their parents, the present study extends a small, but growing body of research that examines the identity work of the second generation in immigrant families. The women of this study provided insight into the dynamic interplay among culture, socio-economic status, and religious belief. It complicated some widely-used concepts including independence, the acculturation gap, family obligations, and postponed marriage. Findings from this study offer a beginning understanding of this complex phenomenon and highlight the need for more research that focuses on negotiations of broader contexts, role expectations, and identities to shed light on understanding young adults' identity

formation processes from diverse cultural backgrounds (Juang & Syed, 2010).

Implications for Practice and Community

Hmong college women's lived experiences described in this study revealed both identity development and parenting in these family systems with implications for clinical practice. First, clinicians who work with children in immigrant families must remain open to the young adult's need for both independence/autonomy and closeness/connectedness. Second, it is important for clinicians to be sensitive to cultures in which elders' opinions are valued. Most of the college women in this study expressed their desire to honor and respect parents' perspectives and value parents' guidance in some areas of their lives.

Third, the ambiguity in role expectations between child and parent can create subtle conflict about sensitive areas such as dating and marriage and support for elderly parents. Clinicians may need to explore meanings of restrictive parenting practices and gender roles in light of the potential acculturation gap that might exist between a daughter and her parents. On the other hand, parenting education may be needed to help parents understand how their daughters go through and feel about the differential treatment in the family. Lastly, community-based programs such as leadership seminars and mentoring programs might provide support to young professional women who struggle to find role models who have found ways to effectively balance both cultures. Programs that help the Hmong community understand how these young professional women struggle to balance both cultures might be helpful. It is important to open a community dialogue to explore how cultural traditions and values can honor the past, adjust for the present, and shape the

future for these emerging adults. Given the vital role the family relationship plays in the Hmong American college women's daily life, the postsecondary educational institutions may need to address the phenomenon of balancing two worlds in the teaching curriculum to avoid treating "culture" as a static frame of reference (Lee, 1997; Ngo, 2002).

Limitations

The qualitative design of the present study allowed for rich data to be collected for the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of Hmong college women's experiences of parent-child relationships. However, as to be expected, generalizability is not possible for a variety of reasons. For instance, the sample was unique-- a small sample of single Hmong college women who attended four-year postsecondary educational institutes. They may not be representative of participants who are married or who attend two-year colleges. Additionally, all but one participant went to college in the same state as their parental home and more than half attended a school in the same metro area. Their experiences may not represent those who leave home for an out-of-state college. The majority of participants' parents did not go to college. All of their parents were alive and still married. Most participants did not have extended family members living in their parental home at the time of the interviews. Therefore, their experiences may not reflect a different group of women whose parents are highly educated, deceased or divorced/separated, or who live in a three-generation home.

Concluding Remarks

The results of this research study accomplished the study goal which was to gain an in-depth understanding of Hmong American college women's experiences of parent-

child relationships. Guided by symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993), it addressed two questions: “What are Hmong American college women’s experiences of being independent from and close/connected to their parents?” and “How do Hmong American college women perceive their role and identity in their interactions with parents?” The findings point to a complex picture of parent-child relationships.

Through an examination of the lived experiences of fourteen Hmong American college women, three themes including seventeen domains were revealed: (1) I am more independent (i.e., decision-making about education-related or career choices, living on her own, financial independence, ideology differentiation, social independence, assuming parenting roles, reduction of familial role expectations, remaining single), (2) I am closer to my parents (i.e., developing psychological bonds, building more understanding, becoming more open in communication, relying on parents’ support, valuing what parents value, accepting some familial role expectations), and (3) I am struggling to find a balance (i.e., excessive emphasis on the “good daughter-in-law” image, son-favoritism, ambivalence in role expectations).

These women’s lived experiences and perceptions revealed that their relationships with parents are quite dynamic, intertwining varying cultural perceptions of independence and closeness to arrive at interdependence. It was clear that the women in this study are actively negotiating their roles and identities in the context of two cultures.

The study complicated or expanded some widely used parent-child relationship concepts in the emerging adulthood and immigrant studies’ literature: residential status, major/career selection, gender roles, postponed marriage, acculturation difference, and

family obligation. Examining the lived experiences revealed in this study provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of negotiating emerging adulthood and identity development for second-generation immigrant women.

Table 1

Participant Profile

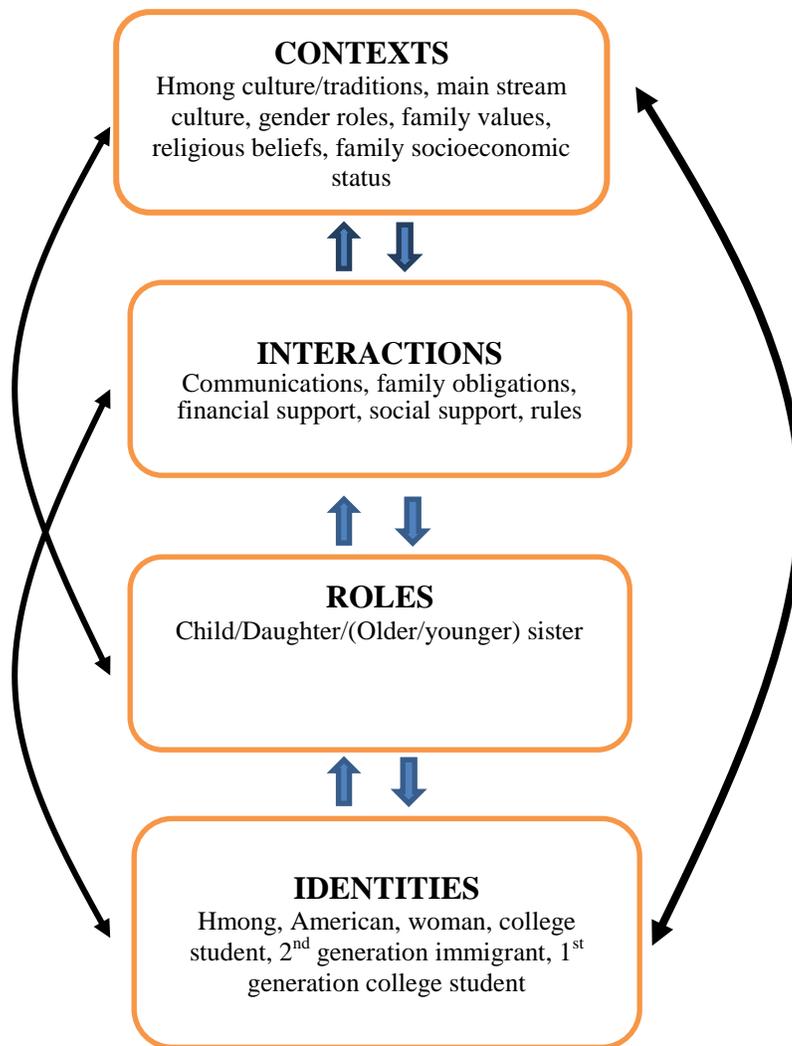
Pseudonym	Major	<u>Participant Characteristics</u>					<u>Parent Characteristics</u>	
		Birth Order	# of Sibling	Work Status	Current Residential Status	Religious Belief	Education	Religious Belief
Bao	Biology	5th	5	36 hrs./week (Summer)	Home	Christianity	Father: Master degree Mother: Some college	Both: Christianity
Cua	Social Science	4th	6	8 hrs./week	On campus	Christianity	Father: High school Mother: None	Both: Christianity
Nou	Social Science	3rd	5	20 hrs./week	On campus	Shamanism	Both: No official education	Both: Shamanism
Mai Yaj	Social Science	3rd	7	40 hrs./week (Summer)	On campus	Christianity	Father: None Mother: High school	Both: Christianity
Houa	Health Care	1st	7	No	On campus	Christianity	Father: None Mother: High school	Both: Christianity
Kia	Social	8th	7	10 hrs./week	On campus	Shamanism	Father: None Mother: None	Father: Shamanism

	Science			Week			(Adult school)	Mother:
Lias	Health Care	1st	2	No	Off campus	Christianity	Father: Bachelor degree Mother: High school	Christianity Both: Christianity
Maiiv	Social Science	5th	5	5 hrs./ week	Home	Shamanism	Father: Associates Mother: GED	Both: Shamanism
Paj	Communi- cation	4th	4	20 hrs./ week	Home	Shamanism	Both: None	Both: Shamanism
Shoua	Social Science	4th	8	10 hrs./ week	On campus	None	Father: College Mother: High school	Both: None
Mai Tong	Social Science	4th	5	No	Home	None	Both: High school	Both: None
Youa	Social Science	1st	4	15 hrs./ week	Off campus	Shamanism	Father: None	Both: Shamanism
Xia	Journalism	1st	4	20 hrs./ week	Home	Catholic	Father: High school	Both: Christianity
Yi	Social Science	4th	6	(no answer)	Home (w/ Sister & brother-	Shamanism	Father: Two-year college Mother: High school	Both: Shamanism

in-law)

Note. None education means no official education in the United States.

Figure 1. Hmong American college women's parent-child relationships: Contexts, interactions, roles and identities. (based on LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p.145).



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APPENDIX A

Hmong American College Women's Experiences of Parent-child relationship**Recruiting Letter**

I am a researcher at the University of Minnesota, Department of Family Social Science and I am currently conducting a qualitative study to better understand the parent-child relationship of Hmong American college-going women. Specifically, I am looking to interview Hmong American single women, who are in the junior or senior year in college/university and who are 18 to 23, who were born or grew up in the United States, and who have parents still married and living in the United States. Participation would involve a one-on-one, audio-taped 70-90 minute interview. Responses from interviewees will be completely confidential and will be kept anonymous.

Please contact me if you are interested in participating and/or would like to refer someone who fits the study population and who might be interested in this study. Thank you for your consideration.

The researcher conducting this study is Shuling Peng from the Department of Family Social Science in the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. If you have any questions, please contact me at: Shuling Peng, 651-734-3891, peng0080@umn.edu; or my advisor Dr. Catherine A. Solheim, csolheim@umn.edu.

Sincerely,

Shuling Peng, Doctoral Candidate
290 McNeal Hall; 1985 Buford Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: 651-734-3891
E-mail: peng0080@umn.edu

Solheim, Catherine A., Ph.D
290 McNeal Hall; 1985 Buford Ave.
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APPENDIX B

Hmong American College Women's Perception of Parent-child relationship**Informed Consent Form**

You are invited to be in a research study regarding the parent-child relationships of Hmong American college women. You were selected as a possible participant because we believe you meet the study inclusion criteria based on a referral or self-referral. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Shuling Peng, doctoral candidate from the Department of Family Social Science in the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of parent-child relationships of Hmong American women who are currently attending a post-secondary educational institution.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to participate in a one on one audio-taped 70-90 minute interview. Your audio-taped interview will then be transcribed by a professional transcriber with no identifiable name attached to the taped interview.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

There are no known risks or direct benefits for participants in this study. However, you will be asked to talk about your experiences with parent-child relationships which involve personal information about yourself and potentially your family.

Compensation:

As a thank you for your time and participation, you will receive a \$20 gift card.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. Once the tape recordings are transcribed they will be destroyed. The transcriptions will not have identifying information. Any sort of report we might publish will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the institution you are attending. If you

decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Shuling Peng, doctoral candidate. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Shuling and her advisor at:

Shuling Peng, Doctoral Candidate
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Buford Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: 651-734-3891
E-mail: peng0080@umn.edu

Catherine Solheim, Ph.D.
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St. Paul, MN 55108
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If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650 or email irb@umn.edu. *You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
Demographic Information

1. Your age: _____
2. Year in college: Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior
2. Current living arrangement: commute living on campus
 living off campus other: _____
3. Do you work? No Yes (approximately ____ hours weekly)
4. In what country were you born: born in the United States
 born in another country _____ (write in country name)
5. How many children are there in your family? _____
Your birth order: _____
6. Family structure (check more than one if needed):
 parents and siblings with grandparent(s) with other extended family members
7. Your religion: _____
8. Family live in: Urban area__ Suburban__ Other _____

Parents information:

9. Education:

Father: _____ Mother: _____

10. Age when they got married

Father: _____ Mother: _____

11. Birthplace:

Father: _____ Mother: _____

12. Occupation

Father: _____ Mother: _____

13. English Proficiency

Father: _____ Mother: _____

14. Religion

Father: _____ Mother: _____

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Under themes are main questions and follow-up or probing questions:

Theme - Independence from Parents

1. As people enter college, some become more independent from their parents, some stay the same. How would you describe your relationship with your parents? Let's start with your mother first. Now how about your relationship with your father? If different, why do you think they're different? Have you noticed any changes in your relationship with your parents from when you were a teenager to now as a college student?

2. I remember when I was younger and started to develop my own values, beliefs and opinions as a young adult. Some remained very close to my parents' beliefs and opinions while other values, opinions and beliefs changed and were different. How close or different are you and your parents in terms of values, beliefs and opinions? Can you talk about some ways you are the same? Can you talk about some ways you are different? Do those differences create any tension between you and your parents? Do you talk with them about this?

3. During the college years, young adults make important decisions in many areas of their lives. I'd like us to spend a little time talking about a few decisions right now:
 - a. Do you live with your parents or are you living away from home? How was that decision made? (Probe – how much influence did your parents have on that decision? Was this ever discussed or was it assumed that you would live at home?)

- b. Other big decisions are what major you will pursue in college and what career you want to have: What is your major? Why did you choose it? What career do you want to pursue? What attracts you to that career? How were those decisions made? Who had the greatest influence on those decisions? How much influence did your parents have? (Probe) Why do you think they wanted you to take that major or have that career?
- c. Now let's talk about dating. Are you currently dating? Have you dated in the past? Are your parents involved in decisions about dating? In what ways? Do they influence who you date or when you date? In what ways? Will they influence if and when you decide to get married? Will they have a say in who you marry? Will your parents be involved in that decision? In what ways? Who will have the final say?
- d. In which of those areas we've just talked about do you feel that you have about the right balance between your parents' influence on your decision and your ability to make a decision by yourself? Why? Do you have any areas in your life where you'd like to be more independent in your decision making? What are those areas? Why is it important to be more independent? Are there barriers that prevent you from becoming more independent? Can you describe them? Are there any cultural expectations that influence this?

4. How close do you feel to your parents?
 - a. Do you feel more close to your mother or to your father?
 - b. How do you communicate with your parents? How often do you talk to them? What kinds of things do you talk about? Do you share what's happening at college? Do you share any problems you might have? Do you tell them when good things happen?
 - c. Is the level of communication different since you started college? In what ways has that stayed the same? Have you experienced any change after leaving home for college? Have you experienced any change after leaving home for college?

Theme- Role and Identity

5. As part of a family, we all have responsibilities to help at home. What family responsibilities do you have while you're in college? Has that changed since you started college? (Or since you moved out of the home) Is it ever difficult for you to fulfill those responsibilities? In what ways? How do you handle it?
 - a. Tell me about your experiences in carrying family responsibilities?
(Follow up: Has there been any change in this respect since you entered college /or moved out?)

6. As a woman who is a daughter, I know that is an important role to play in my family. I'm interested in hearing about your ideas about being a daughter.
 - a. For you, what does it mean to be a daughter who has both Hmong and American cultural influences? Do you think it's different to be a Hmong daughter than it is to be an American daughter? In what ways are they different?
 - b. What do your parents expect from you as their daughter?
Are those expectations different from those for other daughters or brothers? In what ways? Is it more difficult to be a Hmong daughter in America than what you might expect if you were to be a daughter in Laos or Thailand? In what ways?
 - c. Are there areas in your life where the responsibilities of being a daughter conflict with other roles you have, such as being a student, being a friend, being a girlfriend? Can you share a bit about that conflict?
 - d. When you think about dating, getting an education, values/beliefs, do you feel more Hmong or more American?
7. One of the identities you have right now is being a "college woman". What does that mean to you? Are there advantages of being a college woman? Can you describe some? Are there challenges in that role? Can you describe some?

8. What are some of your goals in life? Let's think about 5-10 years into the future. What would you like to be doing? Where do you want to be living? (Probe: marriage/singlehood/ children/family/career/place of residence, etc.) Do you think those are things your parents want for you? Why or why not? How do you know about their expectations for you? Have they ever communicated them to you?

Wrap-up : Thank you for answering these questions and sharing your thoughts with me. I want to make sure that we've covered everything. Is there anything else that comes to mind related to these topics that you'd like to add? Is there anything you'd like to explain further?

APPENDIX E
Examples of the Process of Transforming Meaning Units into Abstract Language

Stage 2: Finding Meaning Units		Stage 3: Transformation
Raw Data/Original Text	Finding Meaning Units	Categorizing Meaning Units Across Participants
<p>Cua: (Line #'s 12-21) Growing up she expected a lot out of me as a Hmong daughter, there is a lot of expectations as Hmong daughter in the Hmong culture. And so with my mom as I entered college she started to have this frustration of why I wasn't coming home a lot, why I wasn't cooking at home, why I didn't want to come home, why I was always at school on campus, why I didn't call her. So, my mom got really frustrated with me that at one point, I would probably say freshman sophomore year she got really frustrated with me. But, it was this whole notion of I'm growing up and I'm living on campus and I'm doing own thing. So, I had to explain to my mom that I'm growing and I'm changing and that, yeah, I'm becoming more independent. And I'm learning things on my own.</p> <p>(Line #'s 27-30) And so now she is, she is getting used to it, she is getting acclimated to the idea that I'm becoming independent and that I'm of age and that I'm growing up and that she doesn't have to watch what I do every minute now, so definitely that has the relationship that me and my mom had, has definitely changed</p>	<p>Cua perceived her mom's frustration on her change in carrying home responsibilities during the first two years of college. Cua attempted to talk her mom into accepting the reality of her becoming more independent. (Independence-role expectation)</p> <p>Cua's mother becomes more accepting of her being independent. Their parent-child relationship improved as the year advanced. (Closeness- understanding/ accepting)</p>	<p><u>Independence experiences</u></p> <p>Live out of home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced family responsibility (Youa) - Learn to take care of herself (Houa) - Flexible time (Houa) <p>Role expectation reduced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Takes time (Cua) - Explain (Cua) - Be herself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • without having to care for younger siblings' needs at school (Nou) • reduced family responsibility (Youa) <p>Decision making on her own</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School choice (Houa, Maiv) - Major selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents do not have college experience (Houa) - Commute (Maive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider family's needs (Maive)

<p>throughout the years.</p> <p>(Line #'s 207-211) I disliked speaking in, in Hmong a lot but, I didn't want to speak Hmong at all and my mom would always lecture me to speak Hmong at home, even at home, you are supposed to speak Hmong, when you are at school you speak English. But, now that I really grown throughout the last few years, I really learn to value that, wow, my Hmong culture, my culture is really unique and the language is really unique.</p> <p>(Line #'s 222-223) we have a big value of family, value family and kinship. So, definitely by keeping relations close.</p>	<p>Cua has changed to value Hmong culture and appreciate the uniqueness of Hmong language. (Connectedness to culture)</p> <p>Valuing family keep Cua close to parents (Connectedness to parents)</p>	<p>Social independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More freedom to hang out with friends (Paj) - Cancelled curfew (Paj) <p><u>Closeness experiences</u></p> <p>More understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent to child Accepting child's developmental need (Cua) ; More support of her new identity (Cua) - Child to parent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents had gone through a lot, sacrifices in the War and immigration; mom's difficult marriages/divorces (Paj) • Family responsibility is about consideration (Maiv) • Parents' language ability is behind (Nou)
<p>Nou (Line #'s 357- 371) Um well I always felt like I always had to play the sister role cuz in elementary school my younger brothers they were in kindergarten so whenever the school needed something they always called me and I would always go and like help. And my younger brother was sick because he was really homesick I don't know why at school and so they would always have to call me and I always had to go and comfort him. And then when I went to middle school I had my older sister there and so I was always known as her younger sister or you know. And then I wasn't known as myself and then whatever she did it kind of like reflect on me and then. Uh and then my younger sister came to middle school and I guess it's just that whole</p>	<p>Before college, Nou was often contacted by her younger siblings' school when something occurred to them, but now she feels that she is allowed to be herself to play such a role to her younger siblings. (Independence-role expectation reduced)</p>	<p>Value same things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connection to mother culture Through speaking Hmong (Cua) Hmong manner: respect elder, dress /act respectfully (Cua) - Value education (Bao, Cua) - Value family and kinship (Cua)

<p>like transition of oh it's I'm always in the middle. And then in high school my younger sister went to a different high school but yeah I had my older sister so I wasn't I had that experience I didn't experience being alone there. And then when it came to college you know I was like I'm gonna go somewhere really different and really far and just somewhere where I can be me. And you know, learn my own identity and who I am, rather than I guess learn through what other people have said about me and my siblings. Or, learn through my sibling's experience.</p> <p>(Line #'s 214-217) Cuz then it's just like okay you want me to be a doctor but you know that's something that I'm not passionate about so in a way making choices when it came to my major, my school, I kind of chose what benefits me rather than what would benefit them.</p> <p>(Line #'s 741-746) Cuz we're, my younger, I guess when my siblings were little their mentality level is the same as my parents, you know; being kindergarten English proficiency, and then now that they've grown up and their English is pretty well. My parents are the one who are still stuck behind, and so I always feel like why should I always focus on my younger siblings when I can always still focus on my parents and help them catch up to us too.</p> <p>(Line #'s 1622- 1634) Um I kind of feel like it's really difficult ...If I do things, just focus on myself, then I'm betraying</p>	<p>Nou was able to insist on choosing the major/school she considered good for herself. (Independence- making her own decision)</p> <p>Nou became more understanding of parents' language limitation and shifted from assisting siblings to her parents. (Closeness- more understanding)</p> <p>Nou felt caught in considering her own needs and meeting her parents' needs in</p>	<p><u>Role and Identity perception:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconnect with Hmongness (Cua) - Being Hmong associated with the preparation of a future daughter-in-law (Houa) - Being Americanized = being educated = being independent. (Cua) - Integration in identity: a good daughter-in-law is honorable person who also contributes to the community (Houa) - Struggles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clash in dating and pleasing parents (Houa) • Providing future support to parents (Nou; Shoua)
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<p>them, you know. Cuz they were the ones who helped me, led me to where I am today. So I kind of feel like there has to be that mutual understanding, like, like I told my parents like even if I do things by myself I'm not gonna forget you guys you know. But I think they think that I'm gonna forget them. Like if I was to live in my own house I, I could support them too. You know it's not that I'm gonna live in my own house and forget about them, just focus on myself. And it's not that I want to get away from them but I don't think they understand that yet. So I think, I think before I do everything I need to seriously communicate with them like crazy 'til they understand like my wants and their wants. Cuz I feel like I'm, I'm giving in to all of their wants right now and I'm ignoring what I want so I think that sooner or later it will probably hit me that I need to do things that I want to do rather than just do things because they want me to do it, or because they want to do it.</p>	<p>term of future residential arrangement. She felt the challenge to communicate with them, letting them understand she would support them but live separately. (Role expectation struggle)</p>	
<p>Houa: (Line #'s 12-17) And so my mom, my mom didn't really like the idea of me going so far away to school ...Unity College (pseudonym) is actually three and a half hours away from here and so when my mom first heard of that, she tried to get me to stay in the cities but I think deep down inside I, I wanted to be released from that and to see how I would um be if I was more independent and just tried to um take care of myself, balance my</p>	<p>Houa made her own decision about the school. (Independence- decision making)</p> <p>She considered that living far from home as allows her to live independently by taking care of herself and balancing her own time. (Independence- living on her</p>	

<p>time, and all of that.</p> <p>(Line #'s 164-167) It was, it was difficult. Um thinking about it now I feel, I feel like it's kind of funny but at that time it was, it was hard because I wanted to be go to this person but at the same time I wanted to please my parents too. And I felt like it was always kind of clashing.</p> <p>(Line #'s 215-218) Um so a lot of the advice they give me is from experience or from knowledge but if they don't know about it they usually just tell me that as long as I thought about uh it through, then I probably because they've never experienced the college life.</p> <p>(Line #'s 893-901) I'm for sure my family like they tell us, it's like: okay, I'm Hmong. When they first started talking about it I Was probably like in middle school or high school, right, it's like: I'm not even close to getting married yet, but I think they've always had this mentality where they are, they need to prepare the girls because they know that that's someday that we're gonna go. And so they, they talked a little bit about it too, they'll mention it here and there like by saying things like: you should wake up earlier and take, you know, that's what an honorable daughter in law would do, like a good one would do. And a good person, I think a good person does so much more than that. They, they would serve in the community and um...</p>	<p>own)</p> <p>Houa felt caught between dating [her ex- boyfriend] and making her parents happy. (Role expectation struggle)</p> <p>Parents allow her to make her own decision such as choosing a major since they did not have college experiences. (Independence- making her own decision)</p> <p>Houa perceived that her parents prepared Her to marry and to be a good daughter-in-law since she was young. (Identity- Hmongness)</p> <p>A good daughter-in-law is a good person who also can contribute to the community. (Identity- Expansion of identity)</p>	
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<p>Maiv: (Line #'s 99-104) Yeah well they don't really have a say but I usually think about from their perspective cause at first I didn't really wanna come to the U of Lake State (pseudonym), I actually wanted to go to Duluth so that I could get some time off from like home but then I was thinking about it and I was kinda worried because I know my parents kind of depend on me also like at home doing like house chore work because um so in my family there's two girls and then four boys and then um...</p> <p>(Line #'s 663-667) Yeah in my household nowadays I don't hear that but I think maybe like uh when I was younger in middle school or in high school maybe that [gender role] was used a lot more frequently. But I think now that um I'm in college and uh I'm more aware and, and exposed and knowing that you know it's not really gender roles but it's, well it's, that's how I think that it's not really gender roles it's just whether or not you're considerate.</p>	<p>Maiv made her own school choice with familial needs in mind, so she chose a close-by school. (Independence-Decision making)</p> <p>After entering college, Maiv became more accepting in terms of family responsibility, which she framed as consideration instead of gender roles.</p>	
<p>Youa (Line #'s 185-190) I have so many big dreams and I, I can't do that if my opportunities are limited, if I always have to come home at a certain time, if, and it drives me nuts sometimes like coming home and then you have to do your homework but oh your family really needs you, you know like with cooking and</p>	<p>Moving back to campus allows her to have freer schedule and reduced family responsibility so that she can focus on school work. (Independence- living out of home)</p>	

<p>all that stuff and it just really distracts you and it makes you, it makes it really hard to prioritize and to, to even question yourself like okay what's more important and so yeah.</p>		
<p>Paj: (Line #'s 21-24) Yeah um well they let me go out more. When I was in high school I could not go out at all, it was after school programs, come home and that's it. Like five o'clock, five pm I have to be home. But now um I can go out with my friends, I can leave the house whenever I want um just things like that, just going out.</p>	<p>Paj's parents allowed her more freedom to hang out with friends after she entered college. (Independence- Social)</p>	
<p>(Line #'s 769-783) Oh yeah um even though she doesn't tell me, I already know, I think growing up I learned how to appreciate and see more things. Like my parents, they escaped war and stuff to come to America and they never really talk about it and they never throw it in our faces like they never say stuff like you're only alive because I you know took care of you or things like that, they never say stuff like that or they never bring it up and say you know I worked so hard so that you could go to school, how come you're doing bad, they never said stuff like that but I can tell when they talk about stories about when they were younger and how, cause I don't have any grandfathers because they both died in the war, my mom would talk about her dad and how he was a soldier, he died, or my dad would talk about how his dad was a soldier and he died, and how much they fought and all the sacrifices. And so growing up it made me realize that my parents had to go through a</p>	<p>She gained more understanding of parents backgrounds: how much they had gone through, including loss of family, poverty, discrimination; this understanding made her want to do her best to pay her parents back. (Closeness- more understanding)</p>	

lot just to get here and even in America they still had to poverty and discrimination because even to this day if my parents go to a gas station and um people will still try to be mean to them you know and rip them off because they can't speak English, you know.

