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Southeast Asian Higher Educational Attainment in the United States – A Narrative Study

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The University of San Francisco

SOUTHEAST ASIAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE UNITED STATES
– A NARRATIVE STUDY

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of the School of Education of the
University of San Francisco

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
Organization and Leadership
By
Tseng-Fouw Gloria Pharn

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under the guidance of the project committee,
and approved by all its members,
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ABSTRACT

Southeast Asian Americans have among the lowest higher educational attainment rates among the Asians. However, aggregated data and the model minority myth often conceal this reality, leaving many Southeast Asian Americans without the proper support systems. The model minority myth, the importance of the historical context of Southeast Asian migration, and the impacts of being refugees, are all addressed as they form the basis of many Southeast Asian Americans experiences in higher education. A narrative approach is utilized to analyze the interviews of ten Southeast Asian American (Cambodian, Hmong, Mien, Khmu, and Vietnamese) college graduates, with Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) as the overarching framework for the study. Four major themes emerged; challenges faced in their undergraduate career, cultural and social capital, and asianization. Disaggregation of data, transition programs, school organizations, curriculum and pedagogy, are advocated for – recommendations which can be applicable to other refugees and populations who may be struggling for educational attainment.

PROLOGUE

My parents were refugees of the Laos War, identifying as Iu Mien or Mien, a sub-ethnic population in Laos. They migrated from Laos to refugee camps in Thailand where they awaited their next destination - San Francisco, California. After arriving in San Francisco, they settled in the city of Richmond, where many Mien people settled. My dad ended up attending Richmond High School and graduating with a high school diploma. He tried to continue his education at a local community college, but was unable to due to his limited English proficiency. My mom never had any formal education, and only learned how to sign her name on legal documents to come to the United States.

I was born in San Pablo, California and grew up in Richmond, its neighboring city that was filled with gangs and violence at the time. We were considered low-income, living in government-subsidized housing or “The Projects”. But when I was young, I did not fully understand what it meant to be low-income or why we were low-income. I thought it was because my dad did not finish college and my mom never went to school. Having a low socioeconomic status as a result of the lack of education made sense right?

I went on to pursue higher education. I was fortunate enough to receive scholarships during my undergraduate career, but because of this, I often heard stereotypes from people saying, “it’s because you’re Asian, you’re just smart,” often discrediting how hard I actually worked. In other instances, when I was not doing well in my classes, people would say “you’re smart, you’ll be able to pass,” when in actuality I may not have had the knowledge and background to do so.

As a first generation, low-income student in college, and a child of refugees, I had to navigate the college system myself; applications, financial aid, buying books, meal points,

transportation, and more. My parents did not know about the application process, or financial aid, and could not provide monetary assistance either - I relied on heavily on financial aid to pay for my expenses such as books and transportation.

As I continued to pursue higher education and postsecondary education, I began to develop the tools to fully understand my experience and my parents' experience and background, the historical context, and what has transpired to get to where we are today. It was not just because my parents did not pursue higher education, it was because of their specific migration as refugees from war, the lack of transferable skills for labor, lack of English proficiency, and the lack of proper support systems. Learning about my parents' background has fueled my interest in learning more about the Southeast Asian American community as a whole, and creating an informative piece that will bring awareness to this population.

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, Asians have often been depicted as high achieving, naturally smart in math and science, hardworking, and able to achieve the “American dream” (Yen, 2000, p. 2). Aggregated data also reveals that many Asians are high achieving and doing well. For instance, academic research shows that Asians have the highest percentage of undergraduate degrees (Ngo and Lee, 2007). This is the case for Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Japanese and Korean (CARE, 2008). Unfortunately, by compiling all the Asian ethnic groups, many may not see that others are truly struggling. The stereotypes that emerge from this data, such as Asians being naturally smart in math, are often untrue for members of this racial/ethnic category. These stereotypes can cause harm to many members who do not fit this mold, particularly the Southeast Asian American population (CARE, 2008; Her, 2014; Ngo and Lee, 2007; Reeves and Bennet, 2004; Teranishi, 2010; Yang, 2007). For the purposes of this study, Southeast Asian Americans refer to Cambodians, Laotian (Lao, Mien, Khmu, Tai Dam, Tai Leu, and many other ethnic groups), Hmong (considered Laotian but disaggregated from Laotian according with the Census Bureau), and Vietnamese (CARE, 2008).

The struggles of Southeast Asian Americans with educational attainment have often been overshadowed by the overall successes of the Asian racial category in the United States (Chang and Le, 2005). Resources may not be allocated to “Asians” because data shows that they are doing well academically. This skewed perspective consequently affects the higher educational attainment of the Southeast Asian Americans who lack the proper support services to achieve academically (Her, 2014; Museus, Shiroma, and Dizon, 2016; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Yang 2002).

Background and Need for the Study

Although there are Southeast Asian Americans who reach their educational goals, a disproportionate number have experienced difficulties succeeding academically (Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Unfortunately, these disparities are often shrouded because of appearance of educational success of the overall Asian racial category. For example, the 2000 U.S. Census showed that 25.2% of Asian Americans aged 25 and over held bachelor's degrees or higher, compared with 15.5% of Americans overall (as cited Yang, 2007, p. 127). Their recent publication of educational attainment states that, "Asians reported the highest percentage of those with a bachelor's or higher degree (54 percent)" (Ryan and Bauma, 2016, p. 3). These numbers are often used to describe the overall success of the Asian racial category, but disaggregated data reveals that this is untrue for other sub-ethnic groups.

Disaggregated data from the 2000 census (Yang, 2007) and 2011 census (Her, 2014), display the alarming number Southeast Asian Americans having the lowest educational attainment for bachelor's degrees compared to other racial/ethnic groups CARE (2008) disaggregated the 2000 census and displayed extremely low figures of bachelor's degree attainment among Asians, specifically Cambodian 9.2%, Hmong 7.2%, Laotian 7.7%. Based on data from American Community Survey 2006-2008, 65.8% of Cambodian, 66.5% of Laotian, 63.2% of Hmong have not even attended college (Southeast Asia Resource Action Center [SEARAC], 2013). This correlates with the disproportionate number of Southeast Asian Americans receiving less than a high school education; Hmong 39.6%, Laotian 34.3%, and Cambodian 38.5% percent (as cited by SEARAC, 2013). At least 88% of the total United States population had at least a high school diploma or GED, which means that 12% of the population

received less than a high school diploma (Ryan & Bauman, 2016, p. 1). This shows the huge gap in educational attainment for Southeast Asian Americans at all levels.

The disaggregation of data is important because it will reveal the disparities that communities experience such as Southeast Asian Americans. The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Protection (2012) advocates for the importance of disaggregating data and argue that it “can help schools and communities plan appropriate programs, decide which evidence-based interventions to select (i.e. have they been evaluated with the target population), use limited resources where they are needed most, and see important trends in behavior and achievement” (p. 2).

Southeast Asian Americans face challenges that many are unaware of. Little research has been conducted on this population in regard to their experiences in college and the support services that may help this population because their challenges are often shrouded by aggregated data that has been reinforced by the model minority stereotype. Therefore, it is important to examine the Southeast Asian American narratives in order create a holistic understanding of their college experiences, and provide recommendations for increasing higher educational attainment in the Southeast Asian American community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a space for Southeast Asian Americans, who have maneuvered the United States’ educational system, to share their experiences in regard to challenges encountered in their undergraduate career, their social and cultural supports, and their experience with the model minority myth and asianization in college. This brings awareness and understanding of the Southeast Asian American college population undergraduate experiences, and aides in dismantling the model minority stereotype. As a result, the study helps provide

solutions and recommendations that can bring them from the margins of failure to bridge services that will help them navigate the system to achieve higher educational success and attainment. Additionally, the study also contributes to the limited body of literature on Southeast Asian American higher educational attainment.

The study begins with an explanation of the underlying stereotype - the model minority. Next the history of migration and the impact of being refugees such as trauma, lack of English proficiency, low socioeconomic status, and sense of belonging is reviewed. The review will illuminate the need for a study of Southeast Asian Americans with an Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) lens to examine intersections, and its significance in educational attainment.

Research Questions

The study is guided by three research questions:

1. What challenges do Southeast Asian Americans face in their undergraduate career?
2. How has the historical context impacted their educational experience, specifically with social and cultural capital?
3. How has the model minority myth and asianization of Southeast Asian Americans contribute to their undergraduate experience?

Theoretical Frameworks

This section provides an overview of several frameworks that guides this study. However, Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) is the overarching framework of this study because it can be used to understand the ways in which race and racism shapes the lives of Southeast Asian Americans in society (Museus and Iftikhar, 2013). First described are the tenets of CRT lens and then the AsianCrit perspective. The AsianCrit framework can be used as a tool to understand the intersectionality of race/ethnicity, immigration status/generation,

socioeconomic status, and cultural capital, and provides and lens to interpret the Southeast Asian college experience, specifically in obtaining a college degree.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is rooted in legal studies and emerged in the 1970s due to the “stalled progress of traditional civil rights litigation to produce meaningful racial reforms” (Taylor, 1998). CRT has evolved and used in higher education to allow scholars and practitioners to confront race and racism. Solorzano (1998) illustrates CRT five of its core tenets: 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism - race and racism is central to the experiences of people of color, however they intersect with other forms of identity which result in further oppression, 2) the challenge to dominant ideology - CRT challenges beliefs of meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity, 3) the commitment to social justice - CRT is committed to social justice and the abolition of racism, 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge - CRT recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color and views the knowledge as a strength and tool in analyzing and reaching racial subordination, through methods such as storytelling, narratives, biographies and more, 5) the interdisciplinary perspective - CRT challenges historicism and advocates for the placing race and racism in both historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods.

CRT has continued to evolve and expand and has branched off to Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit), Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), Critical Race Feminism, and Queer Critical Race Theory (Queer-Crit). These branches do not replace the core CRT tenets but rather provides a tailored conceptual foundation to critically analyze the experiences of racism.

Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit)

Museus and Iftikhar (2013) outline seven tenets to AsianCrit perspective which incorporates the core tenets from Solorzano (1998) and the additional life experiences of Asian Americans: 1) *Asianization* - refers to the racialization of Asian Americans in distinct ways and aggregation of all Asians into a monolithic category, and highlights that racism and nativistic racism is embedded in the United States society, 2) *transnational context* - emphasizes the significance of the historical and contemporary national and transnational context and how it shapes the lives of Asian Americans, such as the displacement of Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese refugees due to the intervention of United States military in Southeast Asia (as cited by Museus & Iftikhar, 2013, p. 25), 3) *(re)constructive history* - highlights the significance of (re)constructing Asian American history since it has often been excluded, and foster pan-ethnic identity and consciousness, 4) *strategic (anti) essentialism* - effective research and advocacy should create a better understanding of the Asian American community as a whole, while producing complex knowledge of the diversity that exists within the group, 5) *intersectionality* - race intersects with other oppressive systems (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, class, etc), to produce conditions of which Asian Americans exist in, 6) *story, theory, and praxis* - “AsianCrit analyses assert that stories inform theory and practice, theory guides practice, and practice can excavate stories and utilize theory for positive transformative purposes” (Museus & Iftikhar p. 27, 2013), and finally 7) *the commitment to social justice* - AsianCrit advocates for the eradication of all forms of oppression.

Previous studies with AsianCrit

Scholars have utilized CRT and AsianCrit to analyze the experiences of Asian Americans such as through case studies and counterstories (Kolano, 2016; Liu, 2009). However, there are

other scholars, such as An (2016) who examined the Asian American experience through the United States history standards and ultimately advocating for the use of AsianCrit as a tool to disrupt the embedded racism in United States history curriculum. These studies are relevant as it informs the need to examine the intersectionality of Southeast Asian American identity.

Application of AsianCrit to this study

AsianCrit framework provides core tenets that are tailored to the Asian American experience, and provides context for exploring the effects of race/ethnicity on students' identity formation and lived experiences. AsianCrit can be applied specifically to Southeast Asian Americans because a majority of them came in the waves of immigration in the 1980s, which places them in a unique historical context. This allows us to critically analyze their experiences with respect to educational attainment or lack thereof.

AsianCrit tenets provide an interdisciplinary framework, which guides the answer to the research questions of this study by informing the methodology as well as the analysis of the study. For instance, asianization explains the model minority myth, while transnational context highlights the importance of Southeast Asian migration to the United States. The (re)constructive history also reminds of the lack of Southeast Asian history in the United States, which contributes to the lack of support and feeling of invisibility among this particular racial/ethnic minority group (Ngo & Lee, 2007). In addition, we also have to understand that there is a shared experience of Asians as a whole, but that there are a variety of cultural and ethnic differences. Furthermore, it allows for the inclusion of analysis of other oppressive systems within the United States and also within a specific Southeast Asian culture, to affect an individual's experience. The Southeast Asian American stories inform AsianCrit and CRT in general, sequentially becoming a tool to advocate liberation from stereotypes, and framing practice for educators.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it is an addition to the scarce research we have on Southeast Asians/Americans. Although disaggregated data is essential, it only highlights part of the story. This study provides another piece of the story for Southeast Asian American higher educational attainment, by examining the narratives of Southeast Asian American college graduates. It illuminates their lived experiences and part of their history, which provide the underpinnings to understanding the challenges they face in higher educational attainment. The study also provides vital information on their social and cultural support, or lack thereof, and their experiences confronting the model minority myth and asianization.

Additionally, refugees in general share similar experiences in low educational attainment since they have been displaced from their homes due to traumatic events such as war, which likely means that they also lack financial resources and support systems in the country they take refuge in. They also experience limited access to education at all levels, especially in higher education (Crea and McFarland, 2015). For instance, the study by Bajwa et al. (2017) revealed that refugees in Canada had trouble “navigating educational pathways, accessing professional supports, evaluating credentials, financing education, navigating immigration systems, using online resources, delaying their educational progress, and contributing to mental health distress” (p. 56). Hence, the recommendations may become applicable not only to Southeast Asian Americans, but also to other refugees being displaced to the United States and other countries. Although each individual’s experience is unique, there are factors such as country of origin, political climate in their home country and the United States, historical context, and more, that allow the utilization of the recommendations to assist the refugee community as a whole. This is important for educators as education and especially higher education, continues to reach those

who are being marginalized. Refugee students will continue face in educational attainment at all levels (Alpak et al. 2015), therefore it is necessary that educators remain informed and equipped with the knowledge to provide the proper support.

Definitions of Terms

Cultural capital: According to Bourdieu (1968b), cultural capital exists in three forms; the embodied state, objectified state, and the institutionalized state. For purposes of this study, cultural capital is referred to as an individual's knowledge and intellectual skills that influence their ability to achieve a higher social-status in society.

Imposter syndrome: Imposter syndrome is used to describe the inability for high achievers to internalize and accept their success (Clance and Imes, 1978). They often credit their successes to luck rather than to ability, and fear that they will eventually attribute their accomplishments to luck rather than to ability, and fear of being exposed as a fraud or an imposter.

Refugees: According to USA for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (USA for UNHCR) agency (2017), refugees are people who have been displaced and forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence. They are often unable to return home or are afraid to do so because of fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Social capital: As defined by Bourdieu (1968b), social capital is “the aggregate of the actual potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group” (p. 248). The amount of social capital an individual has depends on “the size of the network of connections” in which they can utilize to effectively create more capital (Bourdieu, 1968b, p. 249).

Southeast Asian Americans: refer to Cambodians, Laotian (Lao, Mien, Khmu, Tai Dam, Tai Leu, and many other ethnic groups), Hmong (considered Laotian but disaggregated from Laotian according with the Census Bureau), and Vietnamese (CARE, 2008).

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

“...For Asians, the assumptions would be the stereotype- that we’re smart, good in school, good at math, quiet – everyone’s the same, long black hair, Chinese, speak with an accent. We are not all Chinese!” – Franklin Nguyen, 10th grade (Wing, 2007, p. 456)

Data can be used to tell part of a story. For Southeast Asian Americans who do not do well educationally, aggregated data may translate to a deficit outlook that the onus to achieve is up to them. However, this perspective is erroneous because the responsibility for achievement is also on the institutions that reproduce the stereotypes. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the whole story and look not only at disaggregated data, but also the stereotypes, the historical context, and the impact of transnational migration due to war.

This chapter discusses the literature on the model minority myth, a racial stereotype of Asians being smart which has transformed to appear to be harmless, but has negative consequences for the Southeast Asian American community. The historical context of the migration of Southeast Asians to the United States is also illustrated, in order to understand the importance of being refugees of war, and resettling in a society where the model minority myth was already embedded. Additionally, literature on the impact of being refugees such as trauma, lack of English proficiency, low socioeconomic status, and sense of belonging is also described, which provides insights to the inequities associated with Southeast Asian American higher educational attainment.

Review of Literature

Model Minority Myth

Asian Americans were previously viewed as a racial minority, often dehumanized and considered inferior. The blatant negative stereotypes such as being “uncivilized, sinister, heathen, filthy yellow hordes that threatened to invade the United States and ‘mongrelize’ the

white “race” (as cited in Wing, 2007, p. 457). About 100 years later, stereotypes of Asian Americans created a perception that Asians were no longer a racial minority (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Wing, 2007).

These stereotypes are often referred to as the model minority myth, which emerged during the midst of the 1960s racial and gender liberation (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Wu, 2017), casting Chinese and Japanese Americans as model minorities “whose educational success and income attainments had even “out whited” the whites” (Wu, 2017, p. 99). These claims were supported by data such as the U.S. Census, which continues to show aggregated data that Asians are much more successful than other racial/ethnic groups (Chang & Le, 2005; Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Previous academic studies have primarily focused on East Asians (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Japanese) and their successes (Change & Le, 2005), which supported the model minority myths of Asian Americans.

Museus and King (2009) argue that there are five misconceptions associated with the model minority myth: 1) Asian Americans are all the same, 2) Asian Americans are not really racial and ethnic minorities, 3) Asian Americans do not face major challenges because they are Asian, 4) Asian Americans do not seek or require educational resources or support, and 5) college degree completion is equivalent to success.

Although the stereotypes may seem harmless, there were and still are negative effects of the model minority myth. Asian Americans became the model for other minorities to follow, and failure for educational attainment and successes were due to the lack of “industry and values and not due to the fact that America is a fundamentally racist society” (Ngo and Lee, 2007, p. 416). The racialization of Asian Americans created a division among minorities, which has had different social and political implications.

The model minority myth has hindered awareness of the challenges that Southeast Asian American students face (Her, 2014; Museus, Shiroma, and Dizon, 2016; Ngo and Lee, 2007; Palmer and Maramba, 2015; Yang, 2004). Asian Americans were previously not studied in academic research regarding racial/ethnic minorities in educational attainment, because of the effects of the model minority stereotype and the belief that they were not a racial minority and educationally disadvantaged (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Many of the Asian Americans who did not fit into this model, such as Southeast Asian Americans, have been overlooked, without proper support services to assist in their educational attainment. As a result, there has been a failure to understand this racial subgroup within the United States, and the challenges they face in achieving academic success. However, in order to understand the challenges, it is necessary to understand the historical context of the Southeast Asian refugee migration to the United States and how their specific migration was impacted by the model minority stereotype.

Historical Context: Migration of Southeast Asians to the United States

Southeast Asian migration to the United States is a necessary foundation to begin understanding some of the issues they face. Scholars have described the Southeast Asian migration to the United States in two or three waves, with the date of the waves varying in ranges from the 1970s to 1990s (Gordon, 1987; Her, 2014; as cited in Maramba and Palmer, 2014). The first wave is described to compose of Asians who were part of the elite class, high socioeconomic status, who were educated, professionals, worked closely with the military, and migrated with transferable skills and knowledge of the English language (Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007). The second and “larger wave of refugees” consisted mostly of Southeast Asians from “rural areas” (Her, 2014). These people took refuge in Thailand refugee camps for several years

before relocating to the United States (Ngo & Lee, 2007). The second wave of refugees was a result of the wars in Southeast Asia in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The legacies of war. The Vietnam War began in 1954 and was fought between the communist North Vietnam (Viet Cong), and South Vietnam and its ally the United States (History, 2017). The fighting did not only stay in Vietnam, but also occurred in Laos. The United States wanted to disrupt the Vietcong supply lines while also supporting the Laotian monarchy against communist rebels. So from 1964 to 1973, the United States dropped over two million ordnances (weapons, explosives, ammunition etc.) in Laos during 580,000 bombing mission (as cited in Chinese American Forum “The Secret War in Laos”, 2016). This makes “Laos the most heavily bombed country per capita in history” (“The Secret War in Laos”, 2016, p. 10). The bombings decimated villages, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of unexploded ordnances, and displaced an exponential amount of Lao civilians. Once the United States withdrew from Laos in 1973, hundreds and thousands of them fled the country to Thailand, becoming refugees and resettled in the United States (“The Secret War in Laos”, 2016, p. 10). The United States also withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, but the Vietnam War did not end until 1975 when the North took over the South (History, 2017). More than 3 million people were killed, and an estimated 12 million became refugees and resettled in the United States (History, 2017).

Meanwhile, a civil war broke out in Cambodia in 1970 when General Lon Nol initiated a military coup and received backing from the U.S (BBC, 2014; History, 2017). The Khmer Rouge, a communist regime, allied with Prince Norodom Sihanouk against Lon Nol and the United States (BBC, 2014; History, 2017). South Vietnamese soldiers also crossed the Vietnamese-Cambodian border to fight the Viet Cong that took refuge in Cambodia (History,

2017). Soon after the United States left, the Khmer Rouge took over and was in power from 1975 to 1979 (History, 2017). Over the course of four years, the Khmer Rouge committed atrocious acts against humanity – torture, slavery, and genocide of its own people. Over two million Cambodians died from execution, starvation, injuries, exhaustion, and/or torture (BBC, 2014; History, 2017). Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled the country to resettle in Thailand, and about “158,000 Cambodians gained entry into the United States between 1975 and 1994” (Chan, 2015) as refugees.

Migration and refugee acts. United States history has been intertwined with the fate of millions of Southeast Asians from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The United States enacted many migration and refugee acts as a result of the wars in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which contributed to the waves of migration. The Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 was passed to authorize emergency assistance with Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees (H.R. 6755 - 94th Congress, 1975-1976). As a result, the first wave of refugee migration began. The refugees in the first wave were primarily members of the educated elite, professionals, United States military allies (Ngo & Lee, 2007), from higher socioeconomic families, and had more “transferable skills and knowledge of the English language than those in the second wave (as cited in Her, 2014, p. 36).

The political and social changes in the world fueled the more refugee migration to the United States in the 1980s. The Refugee Act of 1980 amended the 1975 act and created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program for “effective” resettlement and economic “self-sufficiency” as soon as possible after arriving in the United States (Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR], 2012). A second wave of refugees (Gordon, 1987; Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007, Palmer & Maramba, 2015) came during this time. The second wave of refugees

(composed primarily of Hmong and Lao people) was much larger, came from rural areas and with low socioeconomic statuses (Her, 2014), and came from agrarian lifestyles (“The Secret War in Laos, 2016). Additionally, they had fewer transferable skills, and were the lowest educated (Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007).

The timing of the migration of the Southeast Asian refugees to the United States is pivotal in understanding how the model minority myth affects this population. This population came to the United States during the 1980s (Gordon, 1987; Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007, Palmer & Maramba, 2015), after the model minority myth was embedded throughout society (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Wu, 2017). Southeast Asians then became part of the monolithic Asian racial category with stereotypes of them as being just like the rest of the Asians, and not requiring educational resources or support, when in fact they came from rural areas and low socioeconomic statuses (Her, 2014) because of their farmer lifestyles (“The Secret War in Laos”, 2016). The model minority myth and the historical context of Southeast Asian migration are part of the foundation that has impacted the lives of Southeast Asian in the United States.

Impact of Being Refugees

Many Southeast Asian refugees had to relocate to the United States but were provided with inadequate government services (Lam and Hui, 2016). They had to learn to navigate the social services system themselves with “low English proficiency, lack of support network and mental health issues” (Lam & Hui, 2016, p. 62). Not only did they face difficulty navigating a new system and language, their struggles were virtually ignored, as they had to face the status quo of the model minority myth. The lasting impacts of being refugees of war was trauma and intergenerational trauma and conflict, lack of English proficiency, low socioeconomic status, and sense of belonging.

Trauma. A critical factor of the Southeast Asian migration is that the majority of them came as refugees and not as immigrants (Her, 2004; Ngo & Lee, 2007). The distinction between refugees and immigrants is that refugees fled their homes because they had to for survival (Her, 2004) and not because of choice. The painful trauma of living through “war, genocide, extreme persecution, and the indigence of refugee camps” (Lam & Hui, 2016, p. 62) can have a significant negative effects such as developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Chung and Bemak, 2002). Refugee populations are at risk for developing PTSD (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Abe, Zane, and Chun, 1994) and clinical studies have shown that many Southeast Asian refugees have experienced serious prolonged trauma as a result of the exponential migration from their homelands from the wars (as cited in Abe, Zane, & Chun, 1994).

Intergenerational trauma and conflict. Southeast Asian Americans born in the United States may also feel distress from their refugee parents’ trauma. Ying and Han (2007) argue that Southeast Asian American families are at a significant risk of intergenerational-intercultural conflict due to the circumstances of being a refugee in a survival mindset. Ying & Han (2007) conclude that the trauma of being refugees affect parenting effectiveness, and creates cultural dissonance which has negative mental health consequences, such as feelings of confusion and being trapped. These complexities can influence the educational trajectories of Southeast Asian American students (Museus, 2013).

Lack of English proficiency. In addition to the trauma that they have experienced and may still be experiencing, this Southeast Asian population also had the lowest English proficiency levels compared to the other waves of migration. The second wave of Southeast Asian refugees was disadvantaged, particularly with the lack of English proficiency (Her, 2014); (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Yang, 2004). Yang (2004) also mentions that Southeast Asian Americans

who were born in the United States still may have difficulties with the English language. Limited English language skills means that Southeast Asians requires more English developmental skills. This often translates to higher rates of Southeast Asian Americans with less than a high school diploma, and disproportionately low undergraduate degree attainment (Palmer & Maramba, 2015). Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey, (2006) found that taking remedial classes, specifically in reading at a 4-year institution, reduced the chances of graduating with a bachelor's degree by 6% to 7%, after controlling for academic preparation and high school skills and family background. Attewell et al (2006) found that over half of the students who took remedial courses, graduated a bachelor's degree within eight years of high school. These challenges in educational attainment translate into economic disparities (Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007) and are a predictor of distress among Southeast Asian Americans (Chung and Bemak, 2002).

Low socioeconomic status. Southeast Asian Americans have some of the highest poverty rates among racial and ethnic minorities (Palmer & Maramba, 2015, p.516). Chung and Bemak (2002) found that having poor English language skills were a predictor of distress among Cambodian men and women. In addition, poor English language skills were also a predictor of distress for Lao men. The distress among Hmong and Lao population arose from the gaining employment, accessing community resources, and the “feeling of guilt for subjecting families to unexpected difficulties to attain financial autonomy” (Chung & Bemak, 2002, p. 117).

Sense of belonging. Maramba and Palmer (2014) found that Southeast Asian American students “share the need to be involved on campus to feel a sense of belonging, support, and making a “home away from home” (p. 525). However, stereotypes, such as the model minority myth, have contributed to the feeling of invisibility and a sense of belonging (Her, 2014). For instance, on college campuses, Southeast Asians may feel invisible or out of place, even among

the wider Asian community because programs may be tailored towards social or cultural aspects, so those who are struggling academically may find themselves marginalized (Lam & Hui, 2016). In addition, the lack of understanding of the history and challenges they face has caused widespread feelings of alienation from mainstream schools (Yang, 2002). There are no curricula specifically including Southeast Asian history and how it became intertwined with United States history, and there is also lack of Southeast Asian faculty and staff. As a result, many of faculty and staff are also unaware of the struggles that this specific population encounters (Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Summary

To properly assist the Southeast Asian American community in reaching their higher educational goals, it is necessary to understand that the low higher educational attainment rates are not due to their inability to perform, but is a result of the model minority myth that envelops this community, their transnational migration as a result of wars that the United States also contributed to, and the negative impacts of being refugees such as trauma, lack of English proficiency, having low socioeconomic status, and a lack of sense of belonging.

Although disaggregated data show that Southeast Asian Americans have disproportionately low higher educational attainment rates, there is little research on the experiences of what happens with Southeast Asian Americans when they enter college. Therefore, it is necessary for the study of Southeast Asian Americans with a narrative approach, to validate their stories and understand their lived college experiences. In examining the model minority myth, historical context, and the impact of being refugees, a better understanding of this racial subgroup is developed. This understanding can then allow practitioners and educators to develop and provide better service to address issues that Southeast Asian students face, such as

providing courses, creating student groups, creating culturally responsible and knowledgeable environment, and creating a sense of belonging for these students. As a student stated in Palmer & Maramba's (2015) study, "[p]eople look at us and think we don't have struggles, but we actually do have struggles" (p. 522).

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

Southeast Asian Americans have among the lowest attainment of undergraduate degrees (CARE, 2008; Her 2014; Yang, 2004), but yet there is not much information or studies as to why. The low educational attainment is often clouded by the aggregated data of the overall Asian racial successes (Her, 2014; Museus, Shiroma, and Dizon, 2016; Ngo and Lee, 2007; Palmer & Maramba, 2015; Yang, 2004). The purpose of this study is bring awareness to the struggles of Southeast Asian American students and to inform practitioners of solutions to increase support services for this racial/ethnic group, by analyzing the challenges, social and cultural support, and the model minority stereotype and asianization, which affect educational attainment among Southeast Asian Americans.

Research Design

The research comprises of narratives from Southeast Asian American college students. A qualitative, narrative analysis approach, which can be both a phenomenon and a method, was utilized to gather, analyze, and represent the stories that were told by the participants. The key components of a narrative analysis approach are the focus on the lived experiences of individuals, collecting individual stories, restorying, the context or setting, and with the collaboration with participants, code themes that emerge regarding the challenges they faced in order to bring awareness and understanding for better programming to help this population to increase access to resources and achieve higher educational successfully.

For this study, the researcher examined the challenges that Southeast Asian college graduates faced in their undergraduate career, their social and cultural capital, and their experiences in the college with the model minority myth and asianization. A narrative analysis approach was appropriate for this study because it gives voice to the participants, whose stories

have not been heard and have been overshadowed by the model minority myth (Her, 2014; Museus, Shiroma, & Dizon, 2016; Ngo and Lee, 2007; Palmer & Maramba, 2015; Yang, 2004). As Creswell (2009) mentions, the researcher in a narrative design, “seeks to examine an issue related to oppression of individuals” (p. 16). A narrative analysis was used to provide specific insights on how the participants personally experienced challenges in higher education, reduced the misconceptions of educational attainment among all Asians, and ultimately bring awareness of the importance in narrative stories and its value in knowledge creation.

This approach has allowed the participants to share their experiences, while the researcher was able to code their narratives and extract related themes that convey their lived experiences. The participants were given the opportunity to read and edit the transcriptions, in order to ensure that the researcher was capturing the right information. This strengthens the approach because participants were able to ensure that their experiences were being told in the properly by being able to verify the transcriptions and themes. Additionally, the restorying from the researcher is a key aspect of the approach and allows the researcher as an educator, to highlight the experiences that are felt among the Southeast Asian college students. It allows the creation of themes, which help provides a holistic understanding of the challenges Southeast Asian college students face, and be used to determine strategic practices to help address the issue of low Southeast Asian educational attainment.

Population and Sample

The population of this study is Southeast Asian college students, specifically of Cambodian, Lao, and Hmong ethnicities. Data from the 2010 census shows that California is home to approximately 36% of the Southeast Asians (SEARC, 2011). Therefore, the study

focuses on a sample of the population in California. Using a chain-referral method (also known as snowball sampling).

The participants have already graduated with their bachelor's degree from a 4-year university, either a University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), or an Ivy League. This population was selected because they have already gone through their undergraduate experience, and may have better insights on their experience and journey towards graduating. In addition, these graduates are largely from the San Francisco Bay Area, which is home to a large number of Southeast Asian Americans (Lee, 2012; University of California, Irvine, n.d.), and from California's Central Valley, which is home to second largest concentration of Hmong people in the United States (Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, and Yang, 2010). The study consisted of 10 participants: Jordan, Tiffany, Brenda, Sarah, Michelle, Scott, Peter, Reina, Lou, and Gwen. The study population had 4 males and 6 females, with the following ethnic groups: Cambodian 1, Hmong 2, Khmu 2, Mien 3, and Vietnamese 2.

Instrumentation

Interviews are the form of instrumentation used in this study. The participants were individually asked open-ended questions and were allowed 30-45 minutes. The interview questions can be found below and on Appendix D:

1. Can you tell me about your experience transitioning to college? How was your experience navigating the application process, and/or financial aid process?
2. What were some of the challenges you faced during undergraduate experiences? How did you go about navigating these obstacles? Were there other systems of support that you had or wished you had in your undergraduate experience?

3. How would you describe your experience as a Southeast Asian student in the classroom setting? Were you able to connect with peers and/or faculty?
4. How was your experience once you were in college as far as support from peers, professors, and/or the college as a whole? If there was not much support, why do you think that was?
5. Is there anything else you think is important for me to understand about your undergraduate experiences as a Southeast Asian student?

Data collection & analysis

Participants were given interview consent forms (Appendix C) prior to the start of the interviews. Interviews were conducted either by phone or in-person. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The researcher received permission from participants to move forward with reviewing and coding each interview. Once coded, the researcher examined patterns that arose from the interviews and extracted common themes to that addressed the research questions.

Human Subjects Approval

The University of San Francisco (USF) Institutional Review Board has approved this study for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS). The purpose of this approval is to protect the participants during the research. The protocol and approval are on Appendix A and B.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

“I felt unprepared. Nobody told me what was the next steps. Nobody told me that you should start looking at classes, what majors - how you look at that, this is how you sign up for classes, think about these things so you can plan ahead.” – Gwen

The researcher conducted ten individual interviews with Southeast Asian college graduates, which provided valuable information in regard to the challenges and successes in Southeast Asian higher educational attainment within various four-year institutions (Universities of California (UCs), California State Universities (CSUs), and Ivy Leagues). During the interview, the participants were individually asked a set of four questions that allowed them to share their undergraduate experiences transitioning to college, any challenges they may have faced while in college, their experience in the classroom setting, and support from the college as a whole. The interviews concluded with an open-ended question, in order to give participants the opportunity to provide more information that could help the researcher understand their lived experiences. The interviews also illuminated the participant’s experiences with cultural and social capital, and asianization.

Findings

Challenges for SEAA College Students

The first research question addressed the challenges the Southeast Asian students faced in their undergraduate experience. Question 1 and 2 asked for the participants’ experiences transitioning to college and the challenges they may have faced while in their undergraduate career. Question 2 provided the most significant findings in which participants shared common challenges such as, academic challenges, challenges navigating the system, and imposter syndrome.

Academic challenges. The participants were asked to describe any challenges they may have faced during their undergraduate career. What was consistent among many of the participants were academic challenges, particularly academic probation and English writing skills.

Academic probation. Six of the participants described how they struggled academically, specifically being placed on academic probation, which means that their overall grade point average (GPA) fell below a 2.0. For instance, Tiffany specifically described how she felt about her academic performance saying, “I’m embarrassed to say this but I didn’t do well at all... I was going to get kicked out of school if I wasn’t going to do anything about it.” For many of the participants, college was the first time they ever failed a class. Michelle stated, “So the first time in college, I failed a class - actually I failed a few classes. I was put on academic probation at one point.” Brenda echoed the same feeling and recalled, “I remember after my first quarter - I took a Bio class, and I totally did not pass that class, and so that was the reason why my GPA was so low, so I was put on academic probation.” Others such as Gwen remember that she “felt really unprepared academically.” Jordan and Tiffany both found themselves playing “catch-up” and “behind in the game.”

Writing Skills. Four of the participants highlighted their writing skills and how it affected their academic abilities. A couple of the participants were initially given conditional admissions because they had not fulfilled their English writing component and were required to complete a transition program to gain full admissions. Jordan mentioned, “I hadn’t fulfilled my college writing requirements yet, my writing skills were subpar.” Jordan described his writing abilities after taking his first semester college writing course, “College Writing 1A proved to be my toughest class because I did not know how to write. I didn’t even know what prose was.” Tiffany

also conveyed her writing abilities during her first semester, “My first class, I didn't even know how to write a paper. I felt like high school didn't teach... I went to college and was like ‘Holy crap.’ I didn't know how to write a paper.” Peter described his experience taking retaking college level English:

“English! That was the worst. I could never pass English. I took it twice at SF State, and when I failed it twice, my financial aid was not going to cover this.... I went to CCC... to take it... I went to CCSF first and failed it over there...So the first two [at CCC]. The first time I failed, I was like ‘I'm going to take the same teacher so I can pass it.’ I learned basically the same thing, but I ended up failing again. And finally passed it the last time, which was five times of English... I also had remedial English. It was not interesting that's why it was hard for me, and the fact that punctuation and grammar was the hardest - I had the idea in my head and what I wanted to talk about, but putting it down on paper was the problem.”

Navigating the college system. The participants were asked how they navigated obstacles or challenges. All ten participants discussed how navigating the college system itself was one of the most significant challenges they faced in their undergraduate experience, specifically, knowing what classes to take or what to major in, lacking guidance, and career planning.

Classes and majors. Reina describes her biggest challenge, “One of my biggest challenges was to know what classes I needed to take... I didn't know how to explore the number of classes at Berkeley.” Many also felt lost, such as Brenda who stated, “I was so lost and I didn't know what major I was going to go into... I was all over the place.” Peter mentioned, “I really didn't know what to study to be honest. I was thinking in my head like ‘Who [do] I know, and

what did they study?” And Tiffany stated, “I was so lost, I didn't have [a goal]. I didn't know what direction I was going. I kept failing all of my classes.”

Guidance. Participants mentioned that there was no guidance, or no knowledge of who to approach for help. Jordan states, “I didn't know who to turn to for help. I was afraid to ask for help... I didn't know what office hours were. I didn't know how to approach the GSI, I didn't know how to approach the professor for help...I didn't know about this... I was completely ignorant. No one really informed me.” Tiffany informed the researcher that she too, was unaware of how college processes worked, “I literally went to my first day of class...I didn't know how anything worked... No one warned me or anything.”

Many of the participants depict their undergraduate experience doing everything on their own. In particular, they mention that the college put a burden on them to know how to navigate the system beforehand. For instance, Reina stated, “I'm first-generation, no one in my family has gone to a UC. So I was just left out to make my own decisions. For someone who doesn't know what to expect that's hard. Trying to figure out everything by myself until later on in my college career... Just not knowing things were really hard” Gwen also stated that “They expect us to do all the research and know how to navigate the system.” Additionally, Brenda shared, “I felt like nobody really checked in on me, and that really surprised me... That really hurt me.”

Furthermore, Lou stated what he would have needed, “I think being assigned...a mentor instead of feeling like I needed to reach out. I think that's because I didn't know what I needed to reach out for.”

Career planning. Several participants mentioned that they were stuck in their major and was unsure what it meant for planning for the future. For example, Sarah stated, “I didn't know how to set myself up for success after college, and to make it out.... I didn't know what I actually

needed to do, to make sure I'm successful in my adult life.” Peter chose his major like many others and stated that “I didn't really pay attention to what comes after that.” Reina stated that she felt like “others know about coming into college, and what to expect after college.” Gwen shared, “I really needed the university to show me that they cared, and for someone to sit down with you for more than 5 minutes to talk about your graduation plan or something.” And Lou felt similarly but described his experience in depth:

“I think coming from a low socioeconomic background, especially this was pretty much a direct result of my parents being refugees, them having a hard time transitioning to the U.S. It made it... difficult for me to see into the future of what a career should be and how I should look for resources. That made it really difficult for me to find a career path while I was in college, because I didn't know what I should be looking for. I didn't know what kind of questions I should be asking.”

Imposter syndrome. All ten participants experienced the imposter syndrome. Many questioned themselves and whether or not they belonged at the college they attended. Jordan said, “I kept questioning, ‘Why was I Cal student? What made them accept me as a student?’” Tiffany remembers not having doubts before college, and began questioning herself as well, “I was like ‘Am I even the right fit for this school?’” Brenda mentioned, “I didn't know how to feel comfortable with where I was at.” Sarah questioned her abilities to even apply to other universities and stated, “That's why I felt like, I don't know if I can make it to UCLA or I don't know if I can make it to Berkeley because I know there are smarter students than me.”

Many participants stated that they did not reach out for resources because they did not want to expose themselves as needing support. For instance, Gwen said she never went to office hours, “I felt like again outing myself like ‘I need the support.’” Reina, on the other hand, said

“Before running to anyone... I would have to exhaust all my resources first before I come running to a counselor.”

Peter noted in particular that he felt like a “token,” and that was the reason of how he got admitted to the university. He questioned, “Why did I get accepted out of everyone else?” He described, “I always felt like I was a token. It would be on the humorous side but I know it's kind of reality because I felt it. Because people would be like ‘How [did] you [get] in SF State?’ I act goofy sometimes and I'm like ‘I'm a token.’ He continued to explain that because he came the city of Richmond, it was a “success story, like ‘he made it.’” Lou provides an overall summary of the feeling and effects of imposter syndrome:

“I think my biggest challenge was probably trying to feel like I was smart enough to belong at an Ivy League. What I mean by that is, I thought I did well in high school, but when I got to my college I realized how big the gap was in my education and others. Here I met people who were winning national scholarships, people who were on international debate teams, etc. and I realized that what I grew up with, what I thought was enough for me, was barely scratching the surface in terms of academic achievement. I think this made me struggle a lot in the beginning, and accepting that I did belong there, I could compete with others... I didn't do that well, I got right below a 3.0 and I know I could've done better if I had studied more and what not. But I just accepted the fact that I'm fine with whatever grade I would get, as long as I passed college, and kind of just went through it.”

Cultural Capital

The second research question asked how the historical context impacted their educational experience specifically with social and cultural capital. Questions 2 and 3 were designed to

address their cultural capital. Through these questions, participants shared their experience academically, navigating the college system, experiencing imposter syndrome, and the desire for knowledge or advice from parents and families.

Family knowledge. In addition to being asked about their systems of support, the participants were also asked what other systems of the support they wished they had during their undergraduate years. Nearly all participants mentioned family as an additional support they wish they had. They each shared that although their families were supportive and were there, they did not know how to help, because the participants were first-generation college students, and their families did not have knowledge of college. For instance, Jordan said, “Because my parents do not have an academic background at all, they never really understood the rigor of it... They were always there, but they really don't understand that kind of world.” Tiffany mentioned, “At the time I really couldn't depend on my family because they didn't know what I was going through.” Additionally, Brenda commented,

“Even though, yes my parents, they didn't know what higher education is, they always told us ‘Do good on homework so that way you can go to college.’ They continued to say that to us throughout our lives, but they didn't know what going to college actually means or all the work that you have to do to get into college. And what happens when you do get into college.”

Sometimes parents did not understand why the participants went further away for school, such as Michelle who stated that lasting impact of the lack family support,

“I think I'm still trying to heal from some of the aspects in college. Part of it was because I lacked family support. My parents, especially my mom, did not understand why I had to move so far away for school. So she was really disapproving of that.”

Peter shared that his parents did not know how to engage with him about college;

“The only system of support that I wish I had was family. It would've been better if they would just ask me ‘How was school going?’ ...Just unconditional support - like ‘How was your day? Tell me about your class’ ... because I don't really talk to them about college, and they just see me as a kid going to school, and hoping I'd get a day job after.”

Reina acknowledged that her family was there, but they were unable to be give advice about college,

“I feel like since they didn't understand how college worked to begin with, it was really hard for me to go to them for advice at all. I don't think I ever did. For them, it was just important I was well and alive... I feel like others know about coming to college and what to expect after college. For me, that would have been super helpful. Even to consider if I wanted to go to UC Berkeley or if UC was the best choice. My parents never even completed high school.”

Gwen shared similar thoughts, and how the lack of knowledge about college affected her experience,

“My parents want me to go to college, they always pushed me to do well. But they never knew what is ‘well,’ or how to support me. I had to do all this and navigate it on my own...So I feel like them not understanding the system, and understanding how education works here, really affected the access to information and resources and just support... But if they could have better prepared me for that process of meeting people and just academic setting.”

All in all, the participants understood that their parents did not have the academic background and that is why their families pushed them to go to college, and used their parents and families as

a motivation. For instance, Scott mentioned, “them being refugees, I saw it as motivation to me.” Peter stated,

“After learning about the experiences of refugees, learning where they came from - that opened my eyes to seeing that they came through all of that for me to get here... That was the only motivation...They never went to school. So me knowing my history was a motivation - like ‘Okay they got me here, I’ve got to do better than what they did.’”

3. Social Capital

Questions 3 and 4 addressed participants’ social capital through connections with peers, classmates, professors, and/or student organizations and communities. After analysis of the responses, it was clear that participants shared similar experiences, such as, lack of classmate connections, having strong peer connections, and being part of student organizations and/or community organizations, which made up their social capital.

Lack of classmate connections. The participants were asked to describe their experience being Southeast Asian in the classroom setting and whether or not they were able to connect with peers and/or professors. Some were able to connect with professors, while others did not build any relationships. All participants revealed that they struggled to connect with their peers in the classroom, and wished to have made more friends. Some never made any friends in class I never made any friends from classes at all, ever. I just never did.” Brenda and Tiffany mentioned that they made only one friend from their classes. Lou stated, “I definitely feel like it was more difficult to connect with peers” in terms of classroom setting.

Some of the participants mentioned not participating in class much or if at all. Michelle described, “I hardly ever spoke up in class and class discussion, which was really hard for my grade. And really hard to forge a relationship with other students or my TA, or my professor.”

Reina believed that it was dependent on the major and the classes taken, "... if you pick the right classes you don't feel like a minority." Most of the participants shared similar thoughts. Scott described his experience with his classmates in his major:

"Film, the demographics - a lot of people are White. Because that way I talk is different. It's kind of slang, mixed with proper [English]. I feel like I was judged by the way I talk... I feel like I was being judged because of that. The thing was, they never seen my videos. I've been doing this since high school, and I felt like my opinion didn't matter. I would say 'Let's go get this shot, let's get this shot, this shot is better, this shot makes more sense to the story.'" And I would tell them that, and they were like 'Nah.' But then they would play the film for the teacher and the teacher would say the same thing I said, the same mistake I said in the first place... It's not like they were being racist or anything... They had their clique... I didn't have a Southeast Asian clique, where I could film with."

Peer support and communities. Participants were asked how they navigated obstacles and whether or not they had systems of support. All participants acknowledged that their social support was a vital factor in overcoming the challenges they faced. Systems of support they had included friends, counselors, student organizations, and other community organizations. All students shared that their peer support and student organizations or communities, were the most significant in terms of helping them succeed.

Peer support system. More than half of the participants describe how they utilized their peer support to help them navigate the college system, and for help academically. For example, Reina stated, "My only way of knowing what to take was people in the classes." Peter, who went to a CSU, described his peer support as, "UC Berkeley students that I could call and talk to,

[and] having my fraternity brothers who'll proofread my papers for me.” Gwen said, “I used my friends. When we were in the same classes, we’d study together. A lot of them were really smart, so I used them to learn.” Tiffany who shared that she struggled academically said, “I asked two of my friends that I knew were really good in writing - I asked them for help... It was me asking other people, not even at school, just people I know.” Lou remarked, “I think there was great amount of support from my peers, mainly being the friends that I made. In the way that you get into study groups, and you get to help each other out. Also with the friends that I’ve made, they pressure me to do better and to get on top of my work.”

Student organizations/communities: All participants mentioned that they became more comfortable and successful once they found their community. Nine of the participants mention specifically being part of a student organization on campus, or a community organization off-campus, which was influential in their success. For example, Scott was part of a community organization since high school and stated, “I feel like [they] were the main ones that actually helped me out. They actually had an effect in my life.”

The participants expressed that the communities they found or created shared common struggles or similar backgrounds. For instance, Jordan described:

“For me - my main involvement were all Southeast Asian programs because they all resonated with me on every single level... I think that without those support groups that really understood our own struggles, our own stories - and basically through that made our own stories valid... They actually wanted to understand your background, your story - make it valid, and sort of put a face to it as well. And not just brush it off.”

These communities became a huge support system. For example, Reina joined a sorority and commented, “that became my support system because it's more like a close-knit family. And my

sisters in the sorority, really helped me out with a lot of things, not just with school, but with personal life - social life.” For many participants, these communities helped with guidance. For instance, Michelle described,

“Luckily, we had a resource on campus called Southeast Asian Resource in Community group... So I was paired up with a peer counselor, who meet with me several times throughout the quarter, just to make sure I was on track, to help set goals for me, and also they would go through my class, my grades, and they would talk about strategies. So they were there for me as a support system.”

Some participants shared that the communities were often what kept them going, such as Sarah who mentioned, “I had APSA, Asian Pacific Student Alliance, and that was the only thing that really kept me going and the different organizations I was part of... you have to go and search and find your own community because it's not going to just be right there.” Jordan shared similar feelings and stated, “It was always refreshing to see because we kept each other inspired. We kept each other going as well.”

The participants who were part of student organizations and/or community organizations shared that they learned of these resources from their friends. Gwen said, “I knew I wanted to do that [be in a student organization], but I didn’t know what organization to be affiliated with. One of my friends was joining or going to the meeting, and he just took me with him and I went. And that’s how it started.” Additionally, Michelle stated in regard to finding resources and communities, “Most of it was through friends who also benefited from these services, so they would let me know. So just through the grapevine - word of mouth.”

Asianization

The third research questions ask how the model minority myth and asianization has affected Southeast Asian undergraduate experiences. Question 4 asks whether or not students felt support from the college, and if they did not, why they believed that was so. Through this question, participants highlighted how the aggregation of all Asians into a monolithic category affected them. For instance, Sarah stated, "...I didn't feel support from the university. I think in general, Asian is very clumped up"

Some participants shared that there is actually a division among the Asian racial category. For instance, Scott illuminated,

"There are a lot of Asians out there like Southeast Asians, that are divided. And I don't see a lot of East Asians trying to help out us Southeast Asians. There's a division..."

Reina also described,

"I think the whole community of Southeast Asian are little mentioned. I think besides, in the groups themselves, they are really [in] silo[es]. The Vietnamese Student Association is very big... but I don't think [there is] much of an alliance... with other Southeast Asian student groups. I don't really hear much of that - other Southeast Asian groups. So I don't know how they work together. As a university, when they talk about Asians, they always talk about all of us. They're never like, 'Southeast Asian groups are very underrepresented and therefore, we need to have more of them'... I think we're just not really inconsideration... I don't know if that has changed but when I was in school, I was oblivious to it because it wasn't mentioned anywhere. As a brand new student, unless you see posters somewhere - they have African American themed dorms, where are the Asian ones, Southeast Asians?... celebrations for Southeast Asians holidays are not mentioned for the excuse if you need to miss a test."

Question 5 allowed for any additional comments to be made, which some participants used to address the model minority myth as well. For example, Scott shared,

“I just want people to know that the model minority myth... is hurting the Southeast Asian community. People thinking all Asians are smart... A lot of Southeast Asians just got here. It's only been like 30 years so we haven't established our grounding yet. A lot of us are still first generation... Not all Asians have it good.”

Sarah also stated,

“... I feel like because the idea that Asians are doing so well, again the model minority myth, you just hear a lot about the different people complaining all the time. ‘Oh they're just a bunch of Asians, they don't need help. There's so many Asians at X, Y, and Z school.’ So it's just like, we get clumped together into that model minority, and our history gets lost in the circumstances, in which we rose from, gets lost.”

Summary

Many of the participants struggled academically and with navigating the college system, and also experiencing the imposter syndrome. Although they received support from their parents and families, the lack of familial knowledge on college negatively impacted how they navigated the system. Despite the lack of cultural capital, and the effects of asianization, the participants had an abundance of peer support and/or support from student organizations and communities, which positively influenced their experiences. The interviews provided valuable insights pertaining to the challenges that Southeast Asian American students face in their undergraduate experience, how cultural and social capital affected their undergraduate experience, and their experiences with the model minority myth and asianization within their college.

CHAPTER V - DISCUSSIONS, LIMITATIONS OF STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

“... we get clumped together into that model minority, and our history gets lost in the circumstances, in which we rose from, gets lost.” – Sarah

Aggregated data of Asian higher educational attainment continues to reinforce the stereotype that all Asians are high achieving and doing well in college, which has disadvantaged the Southeast Asian American community, who often do not fit this mold. The monolithic categorization of Asians, compounded with the model minority myth, has adversely impacted the Southeast Asian community, which is illuminated by the low higher educational attainment rates. Studies which have disaggregated data, show that Southeast Asians are obtaining bachelor’s degrees at extremely low rates; Cambodian (9.2%), Hmong (7.2%), and Laotian (7.7%) (CARE, 2008). More than sixty percent of the population have not even attended college (Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, 2013).

Despite some Southeast Asian Americans obtaining their bachelor’s degree, a disproportionate number have experienced challenges reaching their educational goals (Her, 2014; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Unfortunately, these disparities are often obscured by the model minority myth and/or aggregated statistics that show the overall successes of Asians. Data such as the U.S. Census, and educational attainment reports, and other figures show that Asians in general, are achieving undergraduate degrees at a higher percentage (25.2%) than compared to the rest of the United States population (15.5%) (Yang, 2007; Her, 2014). But when data is disaggregated, we see a huge gap in educational achievement within the racial category, specifically among the Southeast Asian population (CARE, 2008; SEARAC, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to unmask the misconception of model minority myth that surrounds the Southeast Asian undergraduate experience in educational attainment, by allowing

Southeast Asian college graduates share their lived experiences. Ten Southeast Asian American college graduates were interviewed. This allowed for the revelation of factors that contributed to their challenges and successes within the college setting. Ultimately, the research informs educators of the dangers of aggregated data for racial/ethnic groups, and advocates for the disaggregation of data, specifically within the Asian community.

Discussion

Achieving academically was a significant challenge that nearly all the participants experienced. Academic probation was prominent challenge amongst many of the participants. Many of the participants failed classes in their first year of college, which dropped their overall GPA below a 2.0. For example, Michelle mentioned that she failed a few classes and was placed on academic probation because of that. Brenda, Jordan, Scott, Tiffany, and Gwen also described similar experiences and generally feeling unprepared academically.

Many of the participants also described the lack of strong English writing skills, which also affected their academics. For instance, Peter in particular, had to retake college level English up to five times before successfully completing the course, and also mentions having to take remedial English classes. Jordan and Gwen spoke about having to complete a summer program to satisfy their English admissions requirement before even beginning college. While Tiffany also spoke about failing her English class because of her writing skills. The issues of academic probation and the lack of strong English writing skills substantiates the literature and studies which show how many Southeast Asian American students are not college ready and struggle academically with the English language (Yang, 2004; Her 2014). A study from Attewell et al. (2006) also found that taking remedial classes in college reduced the likelihood of graduating with a degree by 6% to 7% only after controlling for academic preparation and high school skills

and family background. Effects may likely be exacerbated if research included the lack of college preparedness, and the lack of educational background within the family household due to Southeast Asians being refugees.

The transnational context of Southeast Asian migration to the United States is significant in understanding how it shapes their lives due to displacement from the wars. Nearly all of the participants' families had little to no educational background because of the history of being refugees from the Vietnam War, Laos War, or the Khmer Rouge. As a result of the lack of knowledge about college, the participants felt that parents and families were not able to be of guidance for all of the participants. This is reflected in APIAF's 2013 National Report showing that Southeast Asian peers were much less comfortable seeking advice from parents and family compared to other Asian peers (Chaudhari, Chan, & Ha, 2013). This adversely impacted the participants' abilities to navigate the college system.

Many participants attempted to navigate the college system on their own, often frustrated and lost. Many were unsure of which classes and majors to take, and felt that they were unable to properly plan their careers. Most of the participants had a hard time reaching out for the resources on campus because of they did not want to "out" themselves as Reina stated. The effects of the imposter syndrome stopped many of them from looking for resources on campus. However, some of them described their experiences reaching out often feeling like the interactions were impersonal and the institution and members of the institutions did not care. For instance, Gwen mentioned how she wished that someone would sit with her for more than five minutes, and Brenda was hurt that no one really checked in on her. Although it is difficult for large 4-year institutions to dedicate more time for students, it is important that students still feel valued and welcomed to utilize campus resources.

The participants compensated their lack of cultural capital and the lack of support they felt from the college, with the immense support of their peers, student organizations, and/or community organizations. Once participants found someone they could connect to, or an organization in which they felt they belonged, they became more successful and actually began to enjoy their undergraduate experience. Many relied heavily on their peers to navigate the college system, such as finding out what classes to take, what to major in, and using them for help on assignments. The peer connections became extremely important since they also could not connect with classmates.

It seems that many could not build a connection with classmates because their classmates were White, and they felt that their classmates could not understand them and their backgrounds. For instance, Scott mentioned most of the students in his major were White and they already had “cliques.” In addition, Gwen mentioned she could never connect with any of her classmates until she started her graduate education, where she connects to students because they are people of color.

Participants felt more comfortable sharing with those of the same race/ethnicities, or just similar backgrounds in terms of socioeconomic status, food, and culture. For example, Jordan mentioned that being in his student organization was an amazing and inspiring experience because they were all from similar backgrounds. Lou, who mentioned that there were not many Southeast Asian American students on his campus if at all, found connections to students of color and those who shared similar socioeconomic status and culture. Some participants such as Jordan and Peter mention that the organizations that they were a part of became their family. The ability to connect on shared experiences created stronger bond for the participants, and thus

created a community of support and essentially a “home away from home” (Maramba & Palmer, 2014, p. 525).

Some participants expressed how the asianization, aggregation of all Asians into a monolithic category has affected their undergraduate experience. For example, Sarah mentioned that she didn’t feel support from the college since Asians were all “clumped” up together and how Southeast Asian “history gets lost in the circumstances.” The dangers of categorizing such a diverse population into one category is the loss of history, and homogenizing experiences, which may affect sense of belonging and identity, and the lack of resources that may stem from understanding this history.

The lack of knowledge and support for Southeast Asian American students can be felt within the college environment from curriculum, to dorms, and religious observances. Like Scott, many others only learned of their history through their peers or organizations, and not the college itself. Reina stated that they “don’t have one class for Southeast Asians” at the university she attended. The lack of Southeast Asian classes shows the lack of awareness of the institutions’ Southeast Asian student population and the need or desire to have a class dedicated for them. Reina also spoke to the larger issue that there is actually a division within the Asian race, and there is no collaboration either. She also mentions how the Asian community itself on campus is not necessarily recognized in terms of having themed dorms, or recognized for their religious observance in regard to class absence. Others such as Scott expressed how the model minority myth is actually hurting the Southeast Asian community because Southeast Asians came here about 30 years ago and have not “established grounding yet.” This means that Southeast Asians are still working to establish cultural capital, and still require resources as first generation, low-income college students. Colleges and educators should display more awareness of this

The lack of cultural capital is also a common issue among all first-generation, low-income college students. However, for Southeast Asian Americans this often goes unnoticed because of the model minority myth, which colleges also participate in when categorizing data and resources based on aggregated data. Southeast Asian American students continue to experience academic challenges, navigational challenges, imposter syndrome, and lack of cultural capital. Fortunately, despite the challenges, Southeast Asian American students create and have a huge peer support system, including student organizations and community organizations, which has influenced their undergraduate experience and helped push them to graduate.

Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation to the study is that the participants are college graduates, all of which have graduated within the past five years. This means that their experiences are not fresh and their recollection may have been limited. Their reinterpretation may not be as vivid as being a current student, experiencing events in present time. However, the value of interviewing college graduates, is that they may have a better understanding of their undergraduate experiences since they are able to reflect back on their experiences.

With narrative research, it is critical to have a clear understanding of the participants' lives to uncover the layers in participants' lives, in order to accurately tell their stories. This means that historical context, personal experiences, background, intersectionality (e.g. gender, age, etc.), and cultural beliefs must all be taken into account. However, capturing all of the factors that influence a person's experience is difficult and beyond the scope of the study.

Participants collaborated with the researcher, which created a system where bias is reduced in the restorying of the narratives. As a researcher, evaluation of one's own experiences

and background becomes necessary, because it may have impacted the way the story was told. However, researcher included their background in the prologue as a measure to counter biases. Nonetheless, an in-depth autobiographical narrative was not employed in the study, which could have been used to analyze parallel to the narratives of the participants. Although this brings an additional challenge of story ownership, participants gave the researcher permission to tell the narratives through the researcher's restorying.

In addition, it was a challenge to get equal representation of each Southeast Asian ethnicity; Cambodian, Laotian (Mien, Khmu), Hmong, and Vietnamese. Since Mien and Khmu, it appears that students fell in a subgroup under Laotian, based on the definition by CARE (2008). This means that over half of the participants are "Laotian." However, it is important to distinguish that each ethnic community may not consider themselves part of this group or accept the definitions as defined by CARE (2008). In addition, it is part of the researcher's duty to bring voice to each participant's experience, but by providing overarching themes and patterns of their unique positions and the challenges faced in educational attainment, the researcher must be careful not homogenize their experiences.

Recommendations

Disaggregated data. Colleges and universities must make more of a concerted effort in creating a campus environment where they are intentionally disaggregating data of large racial groups such as Asians. Asianization in particular, often corroborates with the model minority myth, which negatively impacts Southeast Asian ethnicities in terms of access to resources and even awareness of the issues that they may face. The disaggregation of data will help remove the model minority myths that often prevail in larger data sets and information used to drive decision-making. This will allow institutions to begin combating asianization. Disaggregating

data will show gaps in educational attainment and services, which can be utilized to help advocate for the need of services such as transition programming and more, not only for this population but for other populations as well.

Transition program. Academic preparedness is a reflection of the students' preparedness in their K-12 or secondary education. This speaks to a larger issue of the overall educational cycle and whether or not the secondary education is preparing students for college, especially students of color in low-income, under-resourced schools, which is not addressed in this study. However, in order to create a better transition for Southeast Asian American students coming from low income, under-resourced schools, institutions must create a mandatory program for these students so that they have mentors or guides, which can connect them to resources such as tutoring on campus. This can be done in conjunction with any first-generation student programs that may already be in place, in order to also build connections with other students. This program must be intentional by also incorporating staff and mentors who understand Southeast Asian American historical context of migration, and create a caring environment for these students because many of the students will rely heavily on their peer support or student organization as their main and only source of support on campus.

Student organizations. The study has shown how significant peer connections and students organizations and communities are to the successes of Southeast Asian American students. It is vital that these student organizations and communities continue to be funded and supported. If there is not a specific student organization for the students, one must be created. Student connections are important and helps create an anchor that allow students to feel comfortable and address issues such as sense of belonging, imposters syndrome, and become more involved on campus. Astin's (1985) Theory of Student Involvement indicates that

involvement on campus is correlated to academic performance, which means that student organizations can also aid in increasing retention and academic performance. For Southeast Asian students who often struggle academically, this is an important resource. Additionally, student organizations provide a safe space where these students can share their experiences and build networks with other students.

Curriculum. It is important that colleges and universities offer Southeast Asian courses available for students to take, where there is a larger Southeast Asian American population such as the San Francisco Bay Area, and California in general. It is important that students can learn about their history in school, and not just through their peers or organizations that they are a part of. However, it is also important that curriculum is considered in K-12 before even arriving in college. This may help the (re)constructive history of Asian Americans in general and also with creating awareness and understanding of one's identity.

Pedagogy. Campus faculty members and administration must take into consideration how classes are taught. A couple of the participants mentioned how they connected with professors because they enjoyed the way that they taught or set up discussion. Others often felt intimidated or had traumatic experiences with professors who disregarded their ideas and opinions. Professors must create safe spaces for not just Southeast Asian American students, but also underrepresented students, to feel comfortable enough to share their opinions, and foster a place of learning among all students. This must involve professional development or training that the college must provide for faculty members in order to increase equity and inclusion in the classrooms.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to bring the narratives of Southeast Asian Americans in regard to navigating higher education, in order to understand and illustrate the need for support services for this population. Aggregated data is often used to describe the educational success of the overall Asian racial category, which overlooks ethnicities who may in fact, actually struggle to succeed. Convoluting their story is the model minority myth, which creates a stereotype that is fed by data that is often used widely, such as the U.S. census reports.

The study examined the narratives of ten Southeast Asian Americans (Cambodian, Hmong, Khmu, Mien, and Vietnamese), who graduated from a 4-year institution. These individuals were interviewed separately, which allowed the researcher to code and examine their stories. In doing so, patterns emerged that allowed the researcher to understand the major themes such as challenges they faced, the lack of cultural capital, the significance of social capital, and the impact of asianization on their undergraduate experiences.

According to the study, the challenges that participants faced were in regard to academics (academic probation and lack of strong English writing skills), navigating the college system (knowing what major to choose and what classes to take, lack of guidance, and career planning), and the imposter syndrome. In addition, the lack of cultural capital, specifically familial knowledge, negatively impacted their experience with navigating college. However, all of the participants acknowledged that their social support (peer support and student organization/community support) were positive influences in their undergraduate experience, and often times may have been what got them through their undergraduate education. Their social support became an extended part of their family, in order to compensate for the lack of familial knowledge due to their parents being refugees from the wars in Southeast Asia.

Regardless, most of the participants reiterated the negative effects of model minority myth and asianization on the Southeast Asian communities, which they felt in the colleges they attended. Many felt the college, as a whole, was not supportive because the universities generally cluster all Asians together, losing the significance of their story and struggles.

To properly assist the Southeast Asian American community in reaching their higher educational goals, it is necessary to understand that the low rates are not due to their inability to perform, but are the results of the model minority myth that envelops this community, the transnational migration as a result of wars that the United States, and being affected from being refugees such as trauma, lack of English proficiency, having low socioeconomic status, and a lack of sense of belonging.

As educators, we have the desire to truly help all of our students succeed. This means that we must be more proactive in combating the inequities that have been institutionalized by incorporating disaggregated data for large racial categories, so that we do not overlook those who are on the margins of success and failure. We have to continue to look at data critically and reevaluate services to help the communities in need and address stereotypes such as the model minority. It is important to not only use quantitative data, but also narrative data to have a holistic understanding of how effective programming, courses, and services truly are. In addition, we should also understand the effects of transnational migration not only for Southeast Asian Americans, but also refugees and other immigrants, because they may share similar experiences in educational attainment. Globally, refugee populations are now in the millions, and educators should anticipate the challenges that refugee students will face in educational attainment at all levels (Crea & McFarland, 2015).

As educators and practitioners, it is important now more than ever to be informed of the inequities that are in place and being reproduced, and to shift the onus of success from the students to the institutions. Educators and practitioners not only disseminate knowledge, but possess the ability to inform, change, and empower students with knowledge of their history so that the circumstances in which they arose from, does not get lost.

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Appendices

Appendix A



APPLICATION FOR IRB REVIEW OF NEW RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

If you believe your study meets the criteria for expedited review or full IRB review, complete the following form and upload this document to the online IRB system in Mentor.

1. RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Provide, in lay terms, a detailed summary of your proposed study by addressing each of the following items:

Clearly state the purpose of the study (Usually this will include the research hypothesis)

The purpose of the study is to bring awareness and understanding of the challenges Southeast Asian American students face in higher educational attainment, by providing a space for them to share their educational experiences. This will also add to the scarce body of literature on Southeast Asian American higher educational attainment. The study is guided by three research questions: 1) What are the narratives of Southeast Asians regarding higher educational attainment in the U.S.? 2) How has the historical context impacted their educational experience, specifically social and cultural capital? 3) How has the model minority myth and asianization of Southeast Asians contribute to their feeling of invisibility and alienation?

Background (Describe past studies and any relevant experimental or clinical findings that led to the plan for this project)

There were a couple of studies that used student integration theory and intercultural framework (Museus, Shiroma, & Dizon, 2016) and a cultural mechanisms perspective (Museus, 2013) to find influences of success for this population. In addition, Maramba and Palmer (2014) used Bordieu's theory on social capital to explain the impact of cultural validation on their college experiences. However, there is not a large repertoire of research specifically on Southeast Asian Americans.

Scholars have utilized CRT and AsianCrit to analyze the experiences of Asian Americans such as through case studies and counterstories (Kolano, 2016; Liu, 2009). However, there are other scholars, such as An (2016) who examined the Asian American experience through the U.S. history standards and ultimately advocating for the use of AsianCrit as a tool to disrupt the embedded racism in U.S. history curriculum. As a result, there is a need for a narrative inquiry study with the application of the AsianCrit framework.

Research plan (Provide an orderly scientific description of the intended methodology and procedures as they directly affect the subjects)

This will be a qualitative, narrative analysis using a chain-referral method as a sampling method. Interviews will be the instrumentation used in this study.

Give the location(s) the study will take place (institution, city, state, and specific location)

Participants will be given the option of meeting in a Sharetea Café in Concord, CA, Panera Bread in Pinole, CA, or San Pedro Square in San Jose, CA. Participants will also be given the option to do a phone interview if a face-to-face interview is not possible.

Duration of study project

There will be a one in-person interview, approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length. A follow-up check-in will be conducted 2 to 4 weeks after transcription to ensure the participants feel that their narrative is being told appropriately.

2. PARTICIPANTS

2(a) Participant Population and Recruitment

Describe who will be included in the study as participants and any inclusion and exclusion criteria.
The participants will be Southeast Asians who have graduated with their bachelor’s degrees. This population was chosen because they went through their undergraduate experience and may have better insights on their experience and journey towards graduating.

What is the intended age range of participants in the study?
21-35 years of age

Describe how participant recruitment will be performed.
Through the chain-referral method or “snowball” method, I will contact people I know who have graduated and asked them to spread the word to other Southeast Asian graduates. In addition, social media may also be used as a platform to spread to the word to a larger population.

Do the forms of advertisement for recruitment contain only the title, purpose of the study, protocol summary, basic eligibility criteria, study site location(s), and how to contact the study site for further information? Yes No
*If you answered "no," the forms of advertisement must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to their use.

2(b) Participant Risks and Benefits

What are the benefits to participants in this study?
There is no direct benefit. However, participation in this study will give the participants the space to share their experience and add onto the limited body of research. The experience will also create a space of affirmation and acknowledgment of their journeys.

What are the risks (physical, social, psychological, legal, economic) to participants in this study?
I do not foresee any risks or discomfort in this study.

If deception is involved, please explain.
N/A

Indicate the degree of risk (physical, social, psychological, legal, economic) you believe the research poses to human subjects (*check **the one that applies***).
 MINIMAL RISK: A risk is minimal where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.
 GREATER THAN MINIMAL RISK: Greater than minimal risk is greater than minimal where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. **If you checked “Greater than Minimal Risk”,** provide a statement about the statistical power of the study based on intended sample size, design, etc. to test the major hypotheses)

2(c) Participant Compensation and Costs

Are participants to be financially compensated for the study? Yes No If “yes,” indicate amount, type, and source of funds.
Amount: Source: Type (e.g., gift card, cash, etc.):

Will participants who are students be offered class credit? Yes No N/A
If you plan to offer course credit for participation, please describe what alternative assignment(s) students may complete to get an equal amount of credit should they choose not to participate in the study.

Are other inducements planned to recruit participants? Yes No If yes, please describe.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA SECURITY

Will personal identifiers be collected (e.g., name, social security number, license number, phone number, email address, photograph)? Yes No

Will identifiers be translated to a code? Yes No

Describe how you will protect participant confidentiality and secure research documents, recordings (audio, video, photos), specimens, and other records.

Participants will be given pseudonyms. Any audio taken, once transcribed will be destroyed. The researcher will be the only person who access to the master list that will include participants' names and email addresses, which will be separate from data collected. Any email addresses provided will be only used for purposes of communicating with participants and editing information. In any report that is published, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify any individual participant. Interview consent forms will be kept for 3 years, after which it will be destroyed. Physical research documents will be stored in a secured office cabinet located in Contra Costa College, which is only accessible by the researcher.

Any data provided in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

4. CONSENT

4a. Informed consent

Do you plan to use a written consent form that the participant reads and signs? Yes No

***If "no," you must complete Section 4b or 4c below.**

If "yes," describe how consent will be obtained and by whom.

The interview consent forms will be given to the participants prior to the start of the interview and will be obtained by the researcher, Tseng-Fouw Gloria Pharn. If the interview is conducted over the phone, the interview consent form will be sent via email and must be signed and received prior to the start of the interview.

If the participants are minors under the age of 18 years, will assent forms be used? Yes No N/A

If "no," please explain.

Upload to the online IRB system the consent form(s) that the participants and/or parent/guardian will be required to sign, and the assent forms for children under the age of 18, if applicable.

Note: All consent forms must contain the following elements (quoted directly from Office for Human Research Protections regulations, available at: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.116>). The IRB has consent templates containing all required elements, **and we ask that you use these templates.**

If you believe it is important to create your own consent form, you are free to do so but please ensure that your consent form has each of the following elements and indicate you have done so by checking this box:

I have chosen to create my own consent form and have ensured that it contains the 8 essential elements listed below:

- (1a) A statement that the study involves research, (1b) an explanation of the purposes of the research, (1c) the expected duration of the subject's participation, (1d) a description of the procedures to be followed, and (1e) identification of any procedures which are experimental;
- (2) A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;
- (3) A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research;
- (4) A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;

(5) A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;

(6) For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;

(7) An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; and

(8) A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled."

4b. Waiver of documentation of written informed consent (Complete only if answered "no" to 4a)

The regulations allow instances in which the IRB may waive the requirement for documentation of informed consent, that is, the collection of a signed consent form. If you are requesting a waiver of written documentation (signed) of informed consent, please answer the following questions:

Will the only record linking the participant and the research be the consent document and the principal risk to the participant would be from breach of confidentiality? Yes No

Do you consider this a minimal risk study that involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of research (see 2B above for definition);? Yes No

Explain why you are requesting waiver or modification of documentation of written (signed) informed consent and how you plan to obtain consent.

4c. Waiver or modification of informed consent (Complete only if answered "no" to 4a)

The regulations also provide an opportunity for the IRB to waive the requirement for informed consent or to modify the informed consent process, provided the protocol meets the following criteria:

- (1) The research involves no more than minimal risk to subjects (see 2b above for definition);
- (2) The waiver of alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects;
- (3) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and
- (4) Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.

If you are requesting a waiver or modification of informed consent (e.g., incomplete disclosure, deception), explain how your project meets the requirements for waiver or modification of informed consent, as outlined above. .

Appendix B

Southeast Asian Higher Educational Attainment

Application ID 918

PI Tseng-Fouw Pharn

PI Type Student

Advisor Desiree Zerquera 10/14/2017

Advisor Acceptance Status Accepted

Department Leadership Studies

PI Institution

Submitted By Tseng-Fouw Pharn

Co-PI's

External P.I.'s

Reviewer Ricardo Villarreal De Silva / Completed / 11/16/2017 12:00 PM PST

Review Type Expedited Review

Approval Status Expedited Review Approved

Based on (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior

Date Received 10/15/2017

Date of Completion 11/02/2017

Date Approved 11/17/2017

Approval Expires 11/16/2018

Proposed Start Date 10/22/2017

End Date 12/15/2017

Date Closed

PI Type Student - MA

Funding Source

IRB Review Fee

Grant Number

Consent Waived Not Requested

Waiver of

Documentation of Not Requested

Informed Consent

Other Subjects Type Students who have graduated

Number Of Subjects 15

Appendix C

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive an electronic copy of your signed form.

Your participation is requested in a research study conducted by Tseng-Fouw Gloria Pharn, a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of San Francisco. The faculty advisor for this study is Dr. Walter Gmelch, a professor in the Department of Education at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

Southeast Asian Americans are faring the worst in educational attainment compared to other ethnicities within the Asian racial category. Studies often aggregate data so that people are unaware that Southeast Asians are struggling. By providing a space for Southeast Asian American graduates to share their higher educational experiences, I hope to bring awareness and understanding of the challenges that Southeast Asian American students face in higher educational attainment. In doing so, we will be able to create programs or offer support services that will help them in successfully achieving their degrees/educational goals.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

During this study, you will be asked a series of open-ended interview questions relating to your undergraduate experiences in terms of the following: your support networks, how you navigated the systems, you or your parents' refugee status in relation to your experiences, and stereotypes you may have encountered throughout your experience. I would also like to know if you felt like you were understood or supported at your institution.

AUDIO RECORDINGS:

Interviews will be audio recorded for the sole use of the researcher for the purpose of accurate transcription and coding. Audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will involve one in-person interview, approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length. You will be contacted by email 2-4 weeks after the interview to ensure that your narrative is being transcribed appropriately.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

I do not anticipate any risks or discomforts to you from participating in this research. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will not receive direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, information on this study will add onto the scarce body of research on Southeast Asian American higher educational attainment, and may benefit other smaller ethnic groups and people from refugee families.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. I will be the only person who access to the master list that will include your name and email address, which will be separate from data collected. Please note that it is required by the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board (IRB) that I keep consent forms for 3 years, after which it will be destroyed.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Tseng-Fouw Gloria Pharn at 1(510) 322-0220 or tgpharn@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your experience transitioning to college? How was your experience navigating the application process, and/or financial aid process?
2. What were some of the challenges you faced during undergraduate experiences? How did you go about navigating these obstacles? Were there other systems of support that you had or wished you had in your undergraduate experience?
3. How would you describe your experience as a Southeast Asian student in the classroom setting? Were you able to connect with peers and/or faculty?
4. How was your experience once you were in college as far as support from peers, professors, and/or the college as a whole? If there was not much support, why do you think that was?
5. Is there anything else you think is important for me to understand about your undergraduate experiences as a Southeast Asian student?