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In the Company of Hmong Women:

Sustaining community ties through an eggroll fundraiser

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Asian American Studies

by

Maliya Lor

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

In the Company of Hmong Women:
Sustaining community ties through an eggroll fundraiser

by

Maliya Lor

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Valerie J Matsumoto, Chair

This study explores how Hmong refugee women living in Wisconsin have gained valuable knowledge and skills in their church eggroll fundraiser and the stakes of supporting community ties as first-generation Hmong American women. Through this eggroll fundraiser, I look at refugee women's paid and unpaid labor at two sites: their company jobs where most are employed in metal and plastic industries and their church community. *In the Company of Hmong Women* is a research thesis that centers the voices of nine Hmong women to present their stories of resilience and resistance in Wisconsin. By focusing on women's contribution to their communities, this highlights the ways they have navigated and acquired social capital within and outside their Hmong community.

Community cultural wealth is a critical lens through which to recognize alternative forms of capital in communities of color. This approach aims to center the experiences of people of color and acknowledge histories of resistance against U.S. capitalistic demands that make immigrant and refugee communities disposable. The site of the Hmong women's eggroll fundraiser is one that shows how they are producing and using knowledge, building their community cultural wealth and collective resistance. By looking at these stories, I highlight how Hmong refugee women are making vital contributions to sustain their community ties in Wisconsin.

This thesis of Maliya Lor is approved.

Thu-huong Nguyen-vo

Keith Lujan Camacho

Valerie J Matsumoto, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

For my mom, kuv Niam.

*Ntau txhais tes ua haujlwm sib;
ntau lub tswv yim ua tau txoj kev qhib*

With many hands, the work is light;
with many minds, the pathways are endless

-Hmong proverb

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Ua ntej tshaj plaws, kuv thov ua tsaug rau cov niam tsev ua nej tseem qhib nej lub qhov rooj, nej lub siab thiab nej lub sijhawm muaj nus nqi pab thiab txhawb kuv txojkev kawm. Txhua yam ua kuv tau kawm txog nej lub neej tuaj tebchaws mekas no kuv yuav khaws cia rau hauv kuv lub siab thiab nco ntsoov cov lus qhuab qhia los ntawd txhua tus. Vim yog txojkev pab ntawd nej sawvdaws kuv thiaj li sau tau nej lub neej ua ib qho pov thawj mus qhia rau peb cov hluas thiab lwm haivneeg txog peb cov niam tsev txojkev khwv, sib hlub, sib pab thiab sib pauv zog. Nej lub neej los rau tebchaws mekas yeej tsis yooj yim kiag li. Muaj ntau zau lwm haivneeg saib yus tsis muab nus qhi rau lawm vim yus tsis kawm ntaub kawm ntawv thiab tsis txawj hais lus askiv. Txawm li ntawd los, nej tseem nrhiav tau txoj hauv kev pab nej tsevneeg. Qhov no yog ib qho ua tsim nyog tau qhuas thiab tau kawm los ntawm nej cov niam tsev. Kuv tsis muab dabtsi rau nej tiamsis xav pub ib qho khoom plig no ua yog ib phau ntawv hais txog nej lub neej thiab nej txoj haujlwm ua tseem ceeb thiab muab nus nqi heev li. Kuv ntseeg tias phau ntawv no yuav qhia txog peb cov niam tsev lub tswvyim sib koom ua dejnum rau lub zej zog thiab tseem ceeb tshaj plaws, rau Vajtswv.

Introduction

Welcome to Our Eggroll Fundraiser! Zoo Siab Tuaj Nrog Peb Muag Kabzauv!

Once a year, a small team of Hmong women holds an eggroll fundraiser to provide vital support to their church in Wisconsin. Since 2011, they have worked to refine the operation in order to provide freshly cooked deliveries of eggrolls right to the front doors of their customers' workplaces at precisely the right time.

Walking into this fundraiser, held at a store owned by one of the women, one can expect to see nine, short Hmong women and an organized chaos. Two long plastic tables, covered by bowls, supplies and equipment, form a long working space for cutting, mixing, and wrapping eggrolls. There is much chatter about the ways in which to improve the eggroll filling, making it less salty or adding more meat, while women in the back-kitchen call for the youth volunteers to come drain the freshly cooked eggrolls and do other tasks. In the corner of the room, one woman meticulously calculates delivery schedules and keeps time. She is buried in stacks of Styrofoam take-out containers, spread across the table, neatly organized by shift and company name.

At the end of the day, after 1,800 eggrolls have been delivered, the women wash mixing bowls and large frying pots and divide up or dispose of leftover ingredients. The store where they were cooking is scrubbed and restored to its original state, although the scent of oil lingers on the tables and walls as the women leave to take care of their family duties.

Project Description

My study of this eggroll fundraiser reveals the importance of women's paid and unpaid work in the Hmong American community. My nine interviewees are all members of a small Hmong Christian church in Wisconsin, where they have spent nearly ten years doing an annual eggroll fundraiser to support youth activities. All of them do wage-paid labor—one is a home

healthcare provider, another a farmer, and the rest work in manufacturing. In addition to employment being an integral aspect of their lives in providing income for their families, their paid jobs have enabled the women to raise funds for their church through outreach to mainly non-Hmong co-workers. The eggroll fundraiser serves as an example of women's unpaid work and benefits the church in a variety of ways.

The fundraiser represents Hmong women's commitment to community. Their labor for this church reveals how church has become a site for building community. They rely on their skill at recruiting support in their own Hmong community to raise awareness and sustain a relatively large customer base to help them annually bring in crucial income to their church. Without much help from outsiders, these women utilize their community spaces (Bible studies, song practices, church) to make quick yet sound decisions to carry out the fundraiser and assign key roles to everyone in the women's ministry. It is an operation that requires attention to detail and every woman's labor.

The church to which my interviewees belong comprises less than 50 Hmong families. This congregation is part of a network of Hmong Protestant Christian churches in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The network established their first church in California in the early 1990s; however, this particular church in Wisconsin has only been in existence a little over ten years and it is one of the newer branches of Hmong Christian churches in the United States.

Although two of my interviewees held non-manufacturing jobs, when I write about women's paid labor, I will focus on the majority of the women who have previously been employed or are currently employed in manufacturing work. The factory operatives are the ones who have recruited vital support for the fundraiser by educating co-workers about Hmong

culture and bringing eggrolls for them to try. These women's stories shed light on the ways in which they have endured hardship and resisted unequal treatment at their workplaces.

I conducted oral history interviews with nine women: middle-aged, first-generation Hmong Americans. The names used in my study are pseudonyms: Paj Hnub, Sheng, Ci, Dawb, Hli, Kabzuag, Chao, Houa, and Yee. Most of them arrived in the United States as refugees in the late 1980s through early 1990s. They all moved to Wisconsin during the early 1990s through early 2000s. They commonly cited better economic opportunities, proximity to family, or their connection to people in church as factors in their secondary migration. My project was also based on participant observation because I had been involved with the church's eggroll fundraiser in the past. Using my knowledge of the fundraiser, I was able to ask the Hmong women about specific details of the fundraiser and their roles in it to get a better sense of how the decisions are made and how much preparation is needed to carry out this event. I knew these women prior to my study because of my family's ties to the church. They generously told me about their lives in Wisconsin and their church and how they dealt with hardships navigating the U.S. labor market without the industrial or service-sector skills that were in demand at the time.

The main questions my study addresses are: (1) What does Hmong women's unpaid labor in the eggroll fundraiser reveal about their dedication to their church? (2) What is the significance of the eggroll to the Hmong American experience? (3) What are the experiences of Hmong women entering manufacturing work? (4) How are Hmong women using and expanding their ethnic identities, which include church ties, at their company jobs? (5) What does it mean to be Hmong Christian in Wisconsin? (6) In what ways are first-generation Hmong American women relying on their knowledge of kinship and practices of resistance to generate community cultural wealth?

Historical Background

The Hmong people were greatly impacted by the Secret War that left many of them defenseless and fleeing for refuge in the mountains of Laos. In the 1960s, Hmong were secretly recruited by the United States as guerilla fighters in the war on communism; the Hmong were used to block the movement of communist forces and supplies mainly from Northern Vietnam to South Vietnam via Laos and Cambodia. With the collapse of Saigon, U.S. troops pulled out of Laos in 1975, leaving the Hmong behind as vulnerable targets of persecution by the new Lao government because of their support for the United States.¹

The Hmong presence in the United States was a result of refugee resettlement policies that distinguished them as political refugees and therefore more worthy of support. Southeast Asian refugees arrived in the United States between 1975 through the early 2000s. The first wave of Hmong refugees arrived from 1975-1979 and was dispersed throughout the United States. Although the first group of Hmong refugees were sent to new locations without many Hmong, they were still able to form a community where they were resettled and become active members in the local community. Chia Vang also notes that earlier refugees had connections to American military and humanitarian bureaucracy in Laos.² The Hmong people were one of six major ethnic groups of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The other five include ethnic Lao and Mien from Laos, ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, and Vietnamese and Khmer from Cambodia.³

Refugees are distinguished from immigrants by their pre-migration experiences and eligibility for special government-funded programs aimed at assisting in their initial resettlement

¹Jo Ann Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin* (Needham Heights: A Simon & Schuster Company, 1998). 3.

²Chia Youyee Vang, *Hmong America : Reconstructing Community in Diaspora* (University of Illinois Press, 2010). 47.

³Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 8.

in and adjustment to the United States. Even so, many Hmong refugees who arrived in the United States have experiences similar to those of immigrants. The government had two main strategies to carry out the goals of the refugee resettlement program: to give cash and social welfare benefits, and to disperse refugees around the country to alleviate the financial burden for local communities and state budgets.⁴ The Hmong, like other Southeast Asian refugees, were resettled throughout the United States, a decision by the federal government intended to speed their assimilation into mainstream American society and mitigate the financial and social burdens on states and local organizations. In the early years, more than 70% of all Southeast Asian refugees were concentrated in 12 states, of which California had the highest numbers, nearly 33% of all refugees. Smaller numbers of refugees settled in Minnesota (3.4%), and in Wisconsin, less than 0.5%.⁵

Although the government wanted to disperse refugees across the country, Hmong, like other Southeast Asian refugees, participated in secondary migration to be closer to family and better economic opportunities. Beside the small number of students who lived in the United States prior to 1975, as a result of their alliance with U.S. military and humanitarian personnel during the war years, the largest group of Hmong refugees came during the 1980s (46.1%).⁶ According to the 1990 census, most Hmong were concentrated in three states: California, Minnesota and Wisconsin.⁷ Hmong people have continued to reside in the same three states;

⁴ Ibid. 9.

⁵ Simon Fass, "The Hmong in Wisconsin: On the Road to Self-Sufficiency" 4, no. 2 (1991), <https://www.badgerinstitute.org/BI-Files/Special-Reports/Reports-Documents/Vol4No2.pdf>. 4.

⁶ Vang, *Hmong America: Reconstructing Community in Diaspora*. 44-45.

⁷ E Pfeifer et al., "Hmong Population and Demographic Trends in the 2010 Census and 2010 American Community Survey," *Hmong Studies Journal*, vol. 13, 2012, <http://hmongstudies.org/PfeiferSullivanKYangWYangHSJ13.2.pdf>.

however, the fastest-growing Hmong populations in metropolitan areas are now in the Midwest, in particular, in Minnesota and Wisconsin.⁸

During the peak of Hmong refugee arrival in the United States, the Hmong people, like other immigrants and refugees, formed ethnic organizations to help newly arrived Hmong families to adjust to life in the United States and connect them with social services and employment. However, in Wisconsin, where Hmong people had little presence until later migration to the Midwest, sociologist Jeremy Hein argued that by the mid-1980s, a network of religious organizations, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers constituted a highly efficient resettlement system in the small cities of the upper Midwest. A small-town ethos of volunteerism and civic pride motivated local people to assist those in need, making this a moral imperative.⁹

Some of my interviewees participated in secondary migration to Wisconsin in the late 1980s through early 1990s. They told me that they moved to Wisconsin to be closer to relatives who could help them get better jobs and also to be closer to friends in the Hmong churches. As JoAnn Koltyk points out, second-wave refugees in the 1980s had the advantage of assistance from Hmong families who arrived in the earlier years and could help them apply for government-funded programs.¹⁰ Seven of my interviewees initially resettled in California and Minnesota, one lived in Rhode Island, and another in Colorado. Although my interviewees did not arrive in Wisconsin because of church sponsors, some of them did choose to come to Wisconsin because of their religious connections. They had prior communication with other

⁸ Chia Youyee Vang, "Making Ends Meet: Hmong Socioeconomic Trends in the U.S.," *Hmong Studies Journal*, vol. 13, 2012, <http://hmongstudies.org/CYVangHSJ13.2.pdf>.

⁹ Jeremy Hein, *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006). 80-81.

¹⁰ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 11.

Hmong congregations outside of Wisconsin, and through word of mouth, they came to Wisconsin to join the local Hmong churches.

Historian David Yoo has argued that church ties have been significant for Korean American communities in Los Angeles and Hawaii. One point Yoo emphasizes is that American religion has always been deeply racialized and the narratives of Korean Americans display how individual and group religious identities in the United States are formed.¹¹ Similarly, Chia Vang's ethnographic work on the earlier Hmong communities suggests that church ties have offered new ways of building community after the war.¹² Moreover, Hein argued that Christianity played a large role in Hmong refugee communities, leading many Hmong people to convert and to use church ties to establish new kinship networks. Contact with church sponsors led many Hmong refugee families to convert to Christianity.¹³ It is important to consider Hmong ties to Christian churches as a way Hmong refugees have restructured community ties in the United States.

It is critical to highlight that Hmong Christian women's identities include their experiences in the Hmong Christian church. In my research, I found that these women have formulated both individual and collective religious identities primarily through the church's eggroll fundraiser. Their stories about the preparations for the fundraiser and deliveries of the eggrolls show how Hmong women are adapting American mainstream traditions of fundraising

¹¹ David K Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). 6.

¹² Vang, *Hmong America : Reconstructing Community in Diaspora*. Chapter 3 looks at the ways that the Hmong church in the United States has become such an integral part of the Hmong refugee and Hmong American experience. There have lacked empirical studies looking at the distribution of religious affiliations among Hmong Americans, however, Christianity has been estimated to increase significantly for Hmong people living in the United States. See pages 78-88 for more about Christian churches.

¹³ Hein, *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities*. 118-121; 233-234.

to support the needs of their church and to benefit their community. As novice fundraisers, the Hmong women adapted the American Christian practice of charity as a value within their own Hmong Christian identities. I explore the ways in which Hmong women have been successful in doing their fundraiser and how their labor in the fundraiser has benefited their church while forging community.

Hmong participation in wage labor economy

In the U.S. post-industrial labor market of the 1970s, some Southeast Asian refugees, and mostly men were able to find jobs in the growing service sector due to prior relations with the U.S. military; however, many of the later Southeast Asian refugees arriving during the peak periods of the 1980s and 1990s came from rural areas; they were farm workers and hill tribe people, like the Hmong, and had little education and few occupational skills to engage in the U.S. job economy.¹⁴ The two decades before Hmong arrival in the United States were marked by rapid feminization of the U.S. labor force. This important workplace shift created changes among women workers and the organized labor movement. The inclusion of more women as union members raised issues of special concern regarding their needs.¹⁵

Although manufacturing jobs overall declined in the 1970s due to shifts in U.S. labor practices that weakened workers' rights, Hmong refugees were becoming a key labor force for Wisconsin employers looking for women workers who would accept low pay and intensive labor. In the United States, the manufacturing industry traditionally employed men; however, the feminization of the workforce, with more women entering private and public sector jobs, was influenced by restructuring that changed job security and loosened the traditional patterns of

¹⁴ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 11.

¹⁵ Ruth Milkman, *On Gender, Labor, and Inequality* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016). 184-185.

permanent full-time employment. By the 1980s, the typical woman worker was married and a parent.¹⁶

In Hmong families, although work and household duties in Laos prior to the war were usually done by both men and women, women were not often seen as equal with their husband or other male family members. Hmong gender roles in the traditional patriarchal family have been similar to those in other Asian groups. The social structure of Hmong family life is patrilineal, patrilocal, and patriarchal. The status of most Hmong women is inferior to that of the males in the family.¹⁷ They are expected to accept the authority of their fathers when they are young, husbands when they are adults, and then sons when they are aged.¹⁸

In the United States, Hmong women and men have begun to face changing roles and expectations, influenced by opportunities for education for women and increasing participation in the wage-paid economy. In particular, as Vang notes, Hmong women have achieved greater social status, according to U.S. mainstream values, when they entered into positions of greater visibility (politicians, school board, social services).¹⁹ Pa Xiong-Gonzalo, reflecting on three generations of women in her family, also argues that the expectations of Hmong women have changed and that they challenge the dynamic between men and women; in particular, Hmong women in the United States have gained more authority and this has resulted in more negotiating

¹⁶ Ibid.192-193.

¹⁷ Pa Xiong-Gonzalo, "Growing up Hmong in Laos and America: Two Generations of Women through My Eyes," *Amerasia Journal* 36, no. 1 (2010): 56–104.

¹⁸ Kathleen Uno, "Unlearning Orientalism: Locating Asian and Asian American Women in Family History," in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women*, ed. Shirley Hune and Gail Nomura (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Vang, *Hmong America : Reconstructing Community in Diaspora*. 73-75.

power.²⁰ However, Hmong women's liberation, especially as first-generation Hmong American women, is a challenge requiring skillful negotiation of their community and cultural values within the structures of patriarchy in both the United States and Hmong contexts.

As Hmong women entered into paid work and in particular, the manufacturing industry, families were becoming multi-income households and women gained the opportunity to earn income through work outside the home. However, the gender inequalities in work persisted as working-class women were concentrated in poorly paid, low-status, and sex-segregated jobs. Their wages represented, on average, only 72% of men's full-time weekly earnings. The feminization of low-status work treated women as a source of cheap labor that was not comparable to men's work. These inequalities further reinforced how Asian women's labor is disposable and demonstrated how Asian immigrant and refugee women filled the demand for a low-wage workforce.²¹

The context of the U.S. labor market during this period when the largest groups of Hmong refugees were entering the labor force is important to understanding how the Hmong women were one group left behind by the U.S. labor movement of the 1960s. Hmong workers have also contributed to the resistance efforts when they arrived two decades later and were employed in the electronic and auto industry, where workers' rights won through unions were decaying. During the 1980s and 1990s, a second wave of Hmong refugees arrived. The second wave consisted mainly of rural families with limited educational and occupational skills necessary for the post-industrial U.S. job market, and few Hmong were literate in English and

²⁰ Xiong-Gonzalo, "Growing up Hmong in Laos and America: Two Generations of Women through My Eyes."

²¹ Milkman, *On Gender, Labor, and Inequality*. 198-199.

written languages.²² In addition to these barriers, the economy during the 1980s was not favorable due to the recession and growing anti-immigrant hostility towards refugees who were perceived as taking away jobs from Americans.²³ According to Eric Tang, a scholar activist and former community organizer, Southeast Asian refugees exist at the intersection of the U.S. welfare state *and* the sweatshop firm. They are both the unemployed “slum dwellers” and the overworked.²⁴ Asian immigrants and refugees have been caught at the crossroads of the United States’ political need to be a homogenous nation yet also to fulfill the economic need for cheap labor that can be easily exploited.²⁵ Since Hmong refugees entered the U.S. labor force at a time when manufacturing employers were gearing up to limit workers’ rights by moving their operations offshore, the experiences of these Hmong women provide a window into the demands faced by manufacturing workers in a restructured global economy.

The Hmong women were very resourceful and relied on their ties in the extended family and the larger Hmong community to help them apply for jobs in the area. The Hmong women who did not have access to higher education relied more heavily on their extended families to help them initially find jobs in Wisconsin. They relied on relatives who were already employed at a company or who had experience and could help direct them to apply for jobs through temporary staffing agencies. For example, one woman, when moving to Wisconsin, contacted a

²² Vang, *Hmong America : Reconstructing Community in Diaspora*. 45-47.

²³ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 11.

²⁴ Eric Tang, “Collateral Damage: Southeast Asian Poverty in the United States,” *Social Text* 18, no. 1 (2000), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/31867>. 58.

²⁵ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008). 10-11.

relative living there who helped her apply for a job through one of the local temporary staffing agencies with which many Hmong people living in Wisconsin were familiar.²⁶

During the 1980s and 1990s, Hmong people also participated in low-wage manufacturing work which included electronic assembly, machine operation, jewelry grinding, sorting and collating, and food processing. Other jobs included minimum-wage farm labor, nursery work, janitorial and food service. Those who had some prior experience in the homeland were able to obtain semi-skilled jobs working in U.S. industries such as metal fabrication, carpentry work, and industrial sewing. Vocational training was also an option for those Hmong people who already had higher levels of English proficiency. The training was geared towards future employment as machinists, welders and the like. For those with bilingual skills there were also service jobs in education, hospitals, mutual aid associations and other social services. In particular, Koltyk notes that the many Hmong with low-level job and English-language skills living in Wausau, Wisconsin were working in the manufacturing industries.²⁷

The women I interviewed participated in the same type of low-wage manufacturing work. Most of my interviewees had industrial jobs and three worked in farming, sewing, the jewelry business, and healthcare. In the third chapter, I highlight the stories of four women who were employed at company jobs because they showcase Hmong women's low-wage work. I also include the other three workers not currently employed at company jobs since two of the three held those jobs for a long time and it was important in the early years of the fundraiser that they participated and promoted it among their non-Hmong co-workers. The remaining two women,

²⁶ Interview with Paj Hnub.

²⁷ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 86-87.

who did not work in manufacturing jobs, were included in the first two chapters for their specific contributions to the fundraiser.

In 2017, according to the American Community Survey on work and employment among the Hmong population, Hmong workers predominated in two industries: (1) Over one-fifth (22.9%) of the Hmong population 16 years or older were employed in manufacturing and (2) another one-fifth (22.8%) in education services, health services, and social assistance. By comparison, in the overall U.S. population 16 years or older who were employed, one-tenth worked in manufacturing and 23.1% in education services, health services, and social assistance.²⁸ The number of Hmong workers in the manufacturing industry was more than double that of the overall U.S. working population aged 16 years and older. The Hmong women's work experiences are reflective of those of the larger population of low-wage workers in the United States.

Addressing the gap in the literature

The literature on Hmong workers is limited in both U.S. labor studies and Hmong studies. I argue that the Hmong women are forgotten workers in the U.S. labor force and their stories shed light on the obstacles they have faced in their workplaces as a result of local policy and social tensions in Wisconsin. Welfare reforms that took place in Wisconsin starting in 1996, a time when most Hmong were migrating to Wisconsin, reduced the number of Hmong families on welfare. Most notably, the changes in work requirements for those on food stamps and reduction in cash assistance, impacted families who had the least access to economic

²⁸ Vang, "Making Ends Meet: Hmong Socioeconomic Trends in the U.S."

opportunities to help support them and their families. In 1997, the welfare dependency rate was about 40% and most families were working at minimum wage jobs.²⁹

My study centers the voices of Hmong women who have depended on low-wage work and who are often unheard in the large conversations about Hmong refugee experiences that overlook work or understate the early hardships of Hmong refugees as part of the transition to life in the United States. Most of the research on Hmong employment and work life has been based on census data³⁰ or federally-funded studies on how Hmong families were faring in terms of employment and economic self-sufficiency.³¹ Hmong scholars have relied on quantitative analyses to examine the economic opportunities of Hmong workers, as does JoAnn Koltyk's ethnographic work with Hmong in Wausau.³² My project examines the women workers who participated in industrial work to better understand how women have contributed to their household income and the ways that they continue to support their families and community.

I focus on Wisconsin as a case study of Hmong refugees in the Midwest, where there is still little knowledge about Southeast Asian refugee experiences and in particular, Hmong American experiences, despite the significant representation of Hmong workers in Wisconsin's population. However, early government studies that have focused on Hmong in Wisconsin and elsewhere have shown that majority of Hmong have had low-level, low-paying jobs. Hmong

²⁹ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 79.

³⁰ Work previously mentioned by Mark Pfeifer et al. and Chia Youyee Vang have looked at U.S. census data for 1990-2010 to identify the trends in Hmong population and socioeconomic status. These data on Hmong population in the census didn't start until 1990s. Hmong population was not included in the census until then. Now the American Community Survey (ACS), a survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, puts out reports on Hmong populations by state. The Hmong Studies Journal has compiled ACS survey reports on Hmong, Lao and Vietnamese populations in the United States and by state.

³¹ These were mostly conducted under the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the early years of Hmong refugee resettlement in the United States.

³² Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*.

work experiences have been predominantly in light manufacturing.³³ Current data on the status of Hmong workers showed employment in four main industries from 1990-2010: manufacturing; education services; health care and social assistance; and retail trade.³⁴ Compared to the overall U.S. population, Hmong Americans have greater participation in manufacturing jobs.

Community Cultural Wealth

The Hmong women's eggroll fundraiser shows the strength of their ties to their community. Through the labor that they give to their community, they have shown that it remains important to them to foster these vital social ties with each other in the church and with those in their community—both in the Hmong community and at their workplaces. The fundraiser has become a key site for generating community cultural wealth among these women, who are supporting their church, and shows the cost it takes to balance work for their companies and community.

In this project, I build upon the concept of cultural capital with the understanding that every community has cultural capital.³⁵ Pierre Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital entails that the dominant groups in society acquire cultural knowledge, skills and abilities and, therefore, he asserts that communities are binary: some are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor.³⁶ By contrast, Tara Yosso's concept of community cultural wealth uses a critical race lens to model six forms of capital for communities of color that recognize alternative forms of capital inclusive to "the knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by communities

³³ Ibid. 86.

³⁴ Vang, "Making Ends Meet: Hmong Socioeconomic Trends in the U.S."

³⁵ Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth."

³⁶ Michael Tzanakis, "Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Thesis and The Role of Cultural Capital in Educational Attainment: A Critical Review of Key Empirical Studies," *Educate* 11, no. 1 (2011): 75–90, <http://www.educatejournal.org/76>.

of color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression.”³⁷ The Hmong women’s efforts can be understood through applying Yosso’s concept of community cultural wealth. Although Yosso emphasizes community cultural wealth within the context of education, I argue that her concept is relevant to the experiences in Hmong refugee communities, where they were also perceived as perpetual foreigners and racialized within the U.S. state like other Asian immigrants in the United States. Yosso’s six forms of community cultural wealth include: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital.

The Hmong women I interviewed revealed an array of forms of capital as defined by Yosso’s concept of community cultural wealth, specific to either their companies or the fundraiser. In particular, I observed three forms of capital from their experiences at their companies: aspirational, navigational, and resistant. Aspirational capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. Navigational capital encompasses the skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Having these skills acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints and connects to networks that facilitate navigation. Resistant capital includes the knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. Having resistant capital, as Yosso’s use of the critical race lens implies, is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by communities of color.

As a new group in the late 1980s through 1990s, Hmong people faced racial discrimination at their workplaces.³⁸ Because the U.S. government had institutional ties with Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees in regard to employment, the dominant narrative has

³⁷ Yosso, “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth.” 77.

³⁸ Hein, *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities*.

emphasized that the government helps Hmong workers and their families strive for economic self-sufficiency, promising success through a process of assimilation into U.S. mainstream economy. However, Yen Le Espiritu's critique of U.S. capitalism points to a different understanding of Southeast Asian immigrant and refugee women's experiences in the U.S. labor market from a racial and gendered lens. Hmong women, although they have benefited from institutional structures giving resources to refugees arriving in the U.S. during the 1980s and 1990s, have faced gender and racial prejudice in the workplace, which challenges the image of Hmong workers successfully assimilating into a non-hierarchical, non-racialized U.S. labor market.

Examining the eggroll fundraiser reveals an array of community cultural wealth that the Hmong women display in their efforts to raise money to support their church, particularly familial, social and resistant capital. Familial capital represents the cultural knowledge nurtured within family that carries a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition. This capital holds significance for expanding the concept of family to include a broad understanding of kinship. This is particularly useful and embodied in the Hmong women who have created new kinship ties through their church. Social capital represents the networks of people and community resources. Peer and social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate unfamiliar social institutions.³⁹

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 1, I describe how the Hmong women organize their eggroll fundraiser as one site of unpaid labor. The fundraiser still remains a significant source of income for the church because of the small membership and limited internal funds to support the church's daily

³⁹ Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth."

operations. Most of the internal funds are received from member tithing and personal contributions. As for external funds, the eggroll fundraiser for the past 11 years has become the main source of income. For this reason, I discuss the process of the fundraiser to highlight how arduous the work is for these nine women.

In Chapter 2, I analyze the contributions of Hmong women's labor in the fundraiser, building from the previous chapter, to show their commitment to their community. By looking through the lens of the eggroll fundraiser, I argue that Hmong women have been successful in raising support through this event, which remains an immense task. They have adapted ingredients to create a flavor that they can keep selling to their co-workers, while sharing stories about the Hmong American experience, creating their own Hmong American project.

In Chapter 3, I analyze the Hmong women's manufacturing workplace as one site of paid labor. The women who had worked or were working in manufacturing made key contributions to the church by getting eggroll orders from their co-workers. This interaction with their co-workers links the women's eggroll fundraiser to their manufacturing jobs. I will briefly describe the work conditions under which these women are employed to highlight their work experiences. Then, through the lens of the fundraiser, I will analyze different ways that Hmong women have endured hardships at work and what strategies they are utilizing to survive and speak out against unequal treatment.

Overall, I hope to show how Hmong women's paid and unpaid labor has been valuable to their church community by centering their experiences throughout my chapters, employing Tara Yosso's concept of community cultural wealth, and making space for Hmong women's voices to be heard.

Chapter 1: Peb Muag Kabzauv, Our Eggroll Fundraiser!

A Snapshot of the Eggroll Fundraiser

On an early Friday morning in the summertime, nine Hmong women wake up around 4 o'clock to start the preparations for their annual church eggroll fundraiser. They gather at a store owned by one of the families in the church and within the first hour, the women begin to trickle in, ready to work. They move quickly between the back kitchen and front space of the store while giving one another instructions. They begin setting up the stations for mixing, wrapping, frying, packaging, and delivering. Having held this annual fundraiser for the last eleven years, these women have the whole process ingrained in their memories. Like a well-oiled machine, everyone knows the part they play. They work double shifts at multiple stations whenever there is a shortage of hands. Within the next hour, the store is filled with sounds of busy hands mixing the meat filling and wrapping eggrolls, water running over dishes stacked high in the kitchen sink, youth volunteers hurrying back and forth carrying trays of eggrolls to be cooked or packaged, and laughter among the women as they realize, as a result of leaving their houses so early in the morning, some are wearing their shirts inside out.

These women have not a minute to spare because they have to prepare more than a hundred eggroll orders in less than five hours. Each order might range from six to one dozen eggrolls. As Ci puts it,

This is a commitment and I take it very seriously, like my job at my company that I work. Without this fundraiser, we only have the income coming from the members' tithing. However, the member giving is only for church bills. When we can do these fundraisers, we can save money for other projects.

As Ci states, the fundraiser is a serious commitment. They work diligently to stay on schedule and make their deliveries on time because that is the most important part of sustaining social ties with their customers for future eggroll fundraisers. This enormous task, which requires the labor

of everyone in the small group, is a charge led by the women's leadership team consisting of their president, treasurer, and secretary. Although the leadership may transition every term, the women have an understanding that this fundraiser will be integrated into the group's annual activities. They rely on the president of the women's ministry to confirm the group's availabilities, while the secretary and treasurer keep a record and collect the money at the end of the fundraiser. Although collecting money can become held up due to delays in getting payments, this is not a large concern, as Dawb says,

We have a few orders, sometimes, where they will just take for-evvver for them to bring the money in, you know?...It is usually the same people but...we just take with grain of salt and at least they are helping, and we just give them time to bring in the payment. They usually do, you know, and they have always done it.

Why look at the fundraiser?

They first started this fundraiser in 2007, when the church was deciding to finance a commercial, fifteen- passenger van for the congregation. Since very few of the youth had a driver's license, parents were often coordinating transportation with other parents during the week. When the church leaders proposed buying a commercial van to transport the youth to after-school activities at church members' homes, the women came up with the plan to do a fundraiser in order to finance this expensive purchase that would cost the church at least \$10,000. This was a significant purchase because the congregation was small and unlikely to be able to handle the cost on their own. They tried other fundraisers, but the eggroll fundraiser was more successful in attracting customers from the women's workplaces and ideal for a short-term project.

In this chapter, I will focus on describing the fundraiser to show how these women have made large contributions to their church community through their labor. The nine women that I focus on throughout the chapter all play specific roles in the fundraiser, a key component of

making this large fundraising event successful. I hope that examining the key aspects of the fundraiser, from preparations through the day of the fundraiser and to the end of the fundraising day, will show that these women have developed strategies to help them succeed and that they have a deep commitment to their community.

Part I: Two-week countdown

Much planning and many preparations are needed before the big day of the fundraiser and this is what I will call the “two-week countdown,” because the women are making these decisions only two weeks in advance. They do not spend months recruiting and collecting pre-orders for their eggroll sale. They make the fundraiser happen quickly with minimal planning. Every year these women use their skills to organize a large-scale church fundraiser with only two weeks to plan and coordinate all the help and resources they will need! After they set a date for the fundraiser, they begin collecting pre-orders from their co-workers. Those involved will request the day off from work for the fundraiser because all the activities are held on a Friday. When the order form is finalized, each woman will take one to work with her the next day. However, this isn’t always the case, and actually over time, the women will start collecting pre-orders because they already know the regular customers who buy eggrolls from them.

Two women, Yee and Houa, are responsible for all the shopping and have become recognized for this role. All the women report how many orders they have collected at some point within the two-week window and this helps the shoppers estimate what quantity of ingredients they will need. With time, they have learned to save on the costs of ingredients because they tell the local store owners about their church fundraiser. Yee explained:

I learned how to ask for discounts like 10-15% off. If any stores did this, then I would go back to the same stores because I know they are going to be more receptive to our needs especially the Asian stores only. I will go to Phongsonvan and they will give me a discount if I ask for 15% or something. If they can’t do 15%, they will usually give me

like \$1-2 off which helps. I also ask for discounts when I go to the Vietnamese grocery market, and this is the small one over here, not the bigger store. At the smaller store, the owners are present.

She concludes,

All this really helps us to save some money on our supplies and gives us ideas for next time.

When asked how they discovered which stores give discounts, she explained:

I learned to ask about discounts for church fundraising from small chat that I overhear at Hmong funerals and some would tell me about stores that help give small discounts or give wholesale prices. I know this because I have also gone out to buy supplies and ingredients for Hmong funerals and now for our fundraiser too. So I've just learned more.

Over time, she adapted to the rising costs of ingredients through bargaining:

When I find out which stores give me discounts, I will go there but I will also ask other stores too. If they say no, that's okay with me too because it gives me ideas and I understand too because this is their business and if they can't help, it's up to them. If I wanted to keep asking even when they don't want to help, I wouldn't know how to do it, you know? I will just go to another store. All the ingredients for the fundraiser are bought at the stores the day before.

Usually, any supplies that the women may not have at home or that are in short supply (such as the packing boxes for eggrolls, plastic packing cups for the dipping sauce, and paper towels), one of the shoppers will gather ahead of time. She will go to Sam's Club, a membership warehouse store, because of the discounts on bulk items such as restaurant supplies which are all purchased usually one week prior to the day of the eggroll deliveries. All the ingredients for the filling and dipping sauce will be bought the day before so they do not take up too much refrigerator space at the store and are still fresh. On average, the fundraiser will require about 20 pounds of chicken breasts or thighs for about 150-200 eggroll orders. All the vegetables, including green cabbage, green and yellow onions, and carrots, are bought uncut and also brought to the store after shopping that evening. The main shopper for the fundraiser will do this after getting off work and will spend about two hours buying all the ingredients.

Getting pre-orders is an important part of this two-week countdown. The fundraisers are planned two weeks prior to the day the eggrolls will be delivered, which gives the women enough time to get orders for at least 1,000 eggrolls from their co-workers at three metal and one plastic companies. During this time, all nine women pass around their church eggroll order forms among their co-workers, some asking individually and others sending the worksheet around via coworkers who can facilitate communication with others on the same or different shifts. Yee told me about a particular experience at her husband's company:

I told him to ask his co-workers to help buy our eggrolls, but he didn't want to because he said, "Oh, my co-workers, they don't know what this food is!" For some event, maybe a birthday, I made some eggrolls for his company. I only made a little, maybe 20 eggrolls for them to just try and they did like it.

Although her husband initially resisted helping, she used the eggroll fundraiser as an opportunity to connect with other non-Hmong co-workers who revealed interest in Hmong culture. In particular, Yee described the interest of one of her husband's co-workers in helping to collect orders:

There was this woman, and she was Japanese, who really liked them after eating it. She actually likes to eat Hmong food like papaya salad and other foods. One time she asked me to take her to the Hmong New Year's so she could go try Hmong foods. Like she would eat *pa-le* (sardines) with sticky rice. When she tried Hmong food like this and she liked it, she wanted to help sell eggrolls for me. She is the one who sells the eggrolls!

She described this co-worker's enthusiasm for helping:

She said, "Okay, I will go sell eggrolls for you!" She will take the order form to her company and when she goes to ask her co-workers, she just tells them, "Okay, you have to buy! I will write down your name down and your name and your name too!" This is what she tells me. And if her co-workers ask if the taste is good, she just says, "Don't ask, just buy the eggrolls!" Then they all just buy them. Following this, every time she takes the list, they all just put their names down.

For the women, asking their coworkers at their company jobs to buy their eggrolls depended on their job position and social ties at work. Some have one friend on their shift who knows the

others on the floor; they will go to them first. Their friend will help pass out the order form to others and keep track of it or have the other coworkers pass the form back to the original owner. Other women will post the forms in the lunchroom for a week and collect the order forms at the end of the shift. Still other women ask co-workers individually during their shift to support the fundraiser. In exchange for their coworkers' interest and support, these women take turns doing each other's job at the machines to which they are assigned. For example, Sheng said,

For me, I just say it directly! There's usually an order form, you know? So I just give this to my co-workers and tell them, "My church is doing a fundraiser and we want to ask for you to help support and buy eggrolls." Usually, this company...most of the people here like to eat eggrolls so they do usually buy. Also, when they hear that it's for church, they don't ask too many questions. This company, they buy a lot of eggrolls. Usually, if you bring only one copy of the form, that might not be enough space. I need to also make copies of the order form because so many people like to order so much so one copy is not enough. Since I work as an inspector and I just walk around to each person on the line one by one and work my way all around. You see, when I give them the order form to fill out, I am watching their machine and then by the time it's done, they are done filling out the order form. I do this for everyone on this floor.

By giving the order form to her co-workers while she handles their machines, Sheng is taking advantage of the opportunity to ask her co-workers to support without exerting too much effort.

In particular, the order form has become a helpful document, and she explained,

Yes, there is everything on it and so I don't really need to talk to them about it. Only just say something general like, "Oh, the women's ministry at my church is doing this fundraiser and would you like to help buy eggrolls?"

Part II. Thursday five-hour shift

Usually on a Thursday, after the long hours of standing and sorting plastic and metal parts at their company jobs, the women will meet at one house to begin the hours-long preparations for the eggroll fundraiser that will begin in less than 12 hours. The women immediately find themselves on another shift—from sifting through bits of plastic and metal on long conveyor belts to now sorting through plastic bags filled with many pounds of fresh vegetables from the

Vietnamese grocery market ready to rinse, cut, and grate. Many hands are needed to complete this gargantuan task of cutting and mixing all the ingredients together.

They usually start by rinsing all the vegetables in a large plastic hot pink or lime green mixing bowl decorated in floral patterns. All the carrots are dumped into the bowl to be washed before they are peeled and added to the eggroll filling mixture. All the while, in another mixing bowl, heads of green cabbage are stacked in a pyramid. After all the carrots are rinsed, they are handed off to another person who will remove their skin with a small hand-held peeler. Next, the bowl with all the green cabbage heads is lifted off the floor and placed under the faucet to be rinsed until you can feel the friction of the cabbage skin against your own. After all of them have been rinsed, they are handed off to someone else to be cut and shredded. Cabbage and carrots are two of the main ingredients in eggrolls, providing crucial texture, so the two women assigned this critical task must do it well.

Any youth who wants to help must first pass the “mom’s test,” which Dawb explained:

Let’s say, if we have a young adult, you know, like one of the ladies, the youth member come in to help us and if they’re going to help us with the wrapping then we have somebody who checks it before, check their eggroll before we allow them to continue wrapping with us. If they don’t do a good job and you know, we go tell them to do something else, find something else for them to do. Because there are plenty things to help out. It doesn’t have to be wrapping eggrolls. Like they could help go and wash the dishes. We have all these huge bowls that needs to be washed, you know? And all the utensils need to be washed and things like that. We always have something for our volunteers to do.

Another job that youth volunteers are perceived as capable of accomplishing with little guidance or supervision is separating eggroll wrappers. This task requires little skill but there is a big need for someone to peel each wrapper so that it cuts down on time unpeeling them fresh from the pack on Friday morning. As they are handed a box of plastic Ziploc food-storage bags and a pile of unopened defrosted eggroll wrappers, each a 25-sheet pack, the youth volunteer

begins the process of peeling off every sheet. On average, there have been at least 1,000 eggrolls made annually and usually there will be about 40 packets of wrappers to go through. Every sheet of wrapper is then placed loosely on top of another until all 25 sheets are separated. Then all of them are repackaged in a gallon-size plastic bag to be ready for use the next morning.

The dipping sauce is another important part of the Thursday preparation because its recipe was created by one of the women, and the group continues to prepare it for the fundraiser. The sauce maker role has become assigned to Paj Hnub, who adapted the recipe over time, and she has taught the other women how to make it so that if she is not there someone else can prepare the sauce ahead of time. This is important because the sauce, fairly simple to cook, needs time to cool, and preparing it ahead of time helps cut down on the amount of work they have to do the next morning. Paj Hnub described to me how she learned to adapt this recipe for the fundraiser:

At first, when Hli and the other women first started, they only used the store bought one and add it all together. These last times, I self-taught and learned from watching how to make the sauce. It's about having the right proportions of just enough sour and just enough sweet and a little bit of salt. These are the three flavors that you need in the dipping sauce. That is it! You shouldn't add too much spice because the white people don't like this taste. Only add a little, like very small, just enough to add taste.

She started making the sauce using a pre-made bottled springroll sauce that complemented the eggroll's saltiness with some sweetness— which sounds familiar given America's favorite fusion flavors: sweet and salty. Over time, the recipe for the sauce has evolved because of the rising cost of the store-bought bottled sauce and the desire to create more versatile flavors. After 2-3 hours, the sauce is cool enough to be packaged in plastic cups to be delivered with each eggroll order, two containers of sauce per every half dozen eggroll order.

Meanwhile, another very important preparation is taking place off to the side where intense calculations of time and resources are being made: Another woman, Houa, is organizing the lists of orders by company name and addresses, shift lunches, and delivery schedules.

The first step is arranging all the lists and labeling every order with the correct name and order. With a black permanent marker, Houa will write across the top lid of the Styrofoam to-go boxes the best attempt at reading so many different handwritings and either “1/2 chicken” or “1/2 veg” or “1 doz. Chicken.” As she repeats this step for the following 1,000 eggrolls, she is also systematically organizing every to-go box according to their affiliated company names and shift orders. There are at least four companies at which six of the nine women are employed and another two businesses for which the other remaining three women are self-employed in various sectors, from farming to consultant to salesperson for Hmong arts and crafts at Hmong-specific flea markets. On top of that, Houa must keep detailed notes about which shifts are first and which are second, all the while stacking one box on top of the next, hoping that none of them will slip and lose balance, causing all the boxes to tumble off the table. She will silently do these calculations and stack every box until all of them are labeled. This will take approximately an hour, if not 1.5 hours.

Next, Houa will make sure to draft delivery schedules for the next day, which requires knowing the shift orders. Among the six women who work at the company jobs, they have three shift orders — for first, second, and third shifts. The time of deliveries will range from anywhere between 9:00am through 12:00pm and then on the occasion that there are orders for third shift, there will also be deliveries for 8:00pm.

At this point, there are at least five women working to prepare all the ingredients for cooking, wrapping, and delivery. At the end, all the meat and vegetables are stored overnight in a

commercial-size refrigerator at the house at which they are conducting the fundraiser. They commence again Friday morning at 4 o'clock.

Part III. Friday 14-hour shift

On Friday, the alarm rings at 4 o'clock, although they went home the night prior close to midnight. This allows less than 6 hours of rest and recuperation for the next day's work. Usually the first two women to arrive by 4am at the house will take out any ingredients put away from the previous night. Everyone else begins to arrive sometime between 30 to 90 minutes later, leaving much of the set up to the first 2-3 women who need to pull out all the ingredients that were chilled overnight, any mixing bowls, mixing sauces, extra aluminum pans for transporting uncooked and cooked eggrolls back and forth, cooking oil and various pots for frying and propane gas tanks. The oil is poured into the deep-frying pots; usually there are two, one for the meat option and the other for the vegetarian option. By 5:00am, the oil needs to be hot enough to start frying the eggrolls, so setting the oil is crucial at the beginning of the day. Set up is an important step on Friday and so is making the filling mixture, one a chicken mixture and the other a vegetable mixture (although this one is not as commonly ordered in large quantities).

Paj Hnub is pointed out by the other women as the filling mixer. She may also be the same person assigned to make the sauce the night before, and given her reliable judgement in taste, she becomes the taste tester and mixer on Friday. She arrives no later than 4:30am to begin assembling all the ingredients, including the meat, in one of the large mixing bowls. She spends one hour mixing together all the ingredients while another woman is standing by. By the time she is done mixing the eggroll filling, she signals for the wrappers to begin using the mix to fill the eggrolls.

Ci is the lead wrapper and she is unanimously agreed upon as the best wrapper in the group because of her speed and consistency in wrapping the same or close to the same size and width of eggrolls. She will have one or two helpers— they may not be able to wrap as fast or as consistently, but due to time pressure and the shortage of hands, their help is needed in the critical early hours of the morning. With wrapping, it is vitally important that the right sized amount of the filling is scooped onto the wrapper so that there is just enough for a comfortable bite which can be dipped into the sweet and salty dipping sauce. When folding one corner of the eggroll sheet over the filling, it is crucial to have tight ends to hold the filling inside. If the wrapping is too loose, the wrapper may unravel as the eggrolls are being cooked or there may be excess oil inside the eggrolls after taking them out of the fryer. For these reasons, there are strong objections to those who are unable to tightly wrap.

By 5:30am at the latest, approximately 100 eggrolls need to be cooking in order to meet the morning deliveries at 9:00 and 11:00am. The fryers, usually Chao and one man, are positioned outside where there is more ventilation. They have to remain constantly alert so that the eggrolls are cooked a perfect golden brown. One critical step in this process is to make sure the oil is at the right temperature when the first eggrolls are laid into it so that they will be properly cooked. The fryers have to test the oil by dropping one eggroll in first and watching to see how the oil reacts. If there is a consistent cooking, then the oil is ready, and if there is not, then the oil must be heated more. The chicken and vegetable eggrolls are cooked separately. The cookers must constantly shift from the pot of chicken eggrolls to the second pot of vegetarian eggrolls. Each batch of eggrolls can usually take up to 10 minutes to fully cook to the desired golden hue.

With only a few precious hours in the morning, it is important to keep a consistent heat setting and not waste any eggrolls since time and resources are limited. As a result, and over the

years of doing this fundraiser, one particular woman has become the lead fryer for the fundraiser. She has a trusted role in the fundraiser: much of the time, she is outside frying, either by herself or with a helper. As each batch of cooked eggrolls is lifted from the frying pot and laid in the aluminum tray, lined with a double layer of paper towels, they are stacked vertically to allow for any excess oil to drain onto the paper towel. The smell of oil saturates the women's clothes, hair, and skin as the frying commences and the aroma of fried eggrolls soon fills the atmosphere.

Chao described her role as the fryer:

At the latest, by 5am, you have the grill ready outside. To get it ready, you have to open the propane gas. You should also already have refilled the propane, okay? Maybe at least have two or three propane gas ready full. At least two or three because then when one runs out, you have another one that you can swap it with.

After the eggrolls have drained and cooled for 7 minutes, they are packaged. In every box, the eggrolls are laid one next to the other, and carefully counted for the correct half-dozen or full dozen and for the correct ratios of chicken or vegetable.

Houa is in charge of packaging the eggrolls as well as being the timekeeper, pushing all the other women to pick up the pace if they are falling behind. Working with the orders, she can see the mountain of stacked empty eggroll order boxes still needing to be filled and so this puts pressure on her to make sure all hands are on deck. If there were a youth without a task at this time, she will ask them to replace her in packaging the cooked eggrolls while she jumps to the next task that needs attention. This might be wrapping eggrolls or making another batch of filling because it is running low.

At other times, if more eggroll wrappers are needed and the women are unable to stop to peel them, a youth member will come help separate new wrappers. This helps keep the women on schedule because they do not have to stop to wait for more wrappers or to do the peeling themselves. Sometimes if they are running low on helpers, one person will need to separate and

hand out the wrappers while the other women are still wrapping. There is no stopping, and the women who are wrapping eggrolls are handed wrappers one after another.

At 7:30am, it is time for a checkpoint on the progress of eggrolls before the first of the morning deliveries. Are there enough ingredients left to make the rest of the orders? Are there enough eggrolls to finish the orders for 9:00am? Does someone need to head to the Vietnamese grocery market to replenish any supplies or ingredients? Who will be available to make deliveries? How many eggrolls are chicken and vegetable, and do we need to switch up whichever one we are wrapping? How many boxes are currently filled? How do the eggrolls taste? Do we need to adjust the taste before continuing with wrapping more eggrolls? How do the eggrolls taste with the sauce? Is there enough sauce packaged and ready to accompany the eggrolls? With only one hour and 30 minutes left to go before the first shift deliveries, if the women are behind, they will need to re-organize who is assigned to what other task that may not be important just yet, because delivering on time is critical to the success of their fundraisers. They know their co-workers/customers only have a limited amount of time for lunch at work, so it is important their deliveries not be late.

Making Deliveries

The women's workplaces are important sites to gather pre-orders from their co-workers throughout the weeks. Most of the women work in manufacturing jobs for plastic and auto parts, where they are machine operators. Their co-workers are working-class people of color and usually there are white male co-workers who supervise the floor along with a technician, usually white and male as well.

The deliveries are a very important marketing strategy for the women's fundraiser. Since many of their customers are their co-workers, the women want to make the fundraiser as easy as

possible and least inconvenient for their coworkers. Although the women with company jobs, work either first (6-3pm) or second shifts (2-10pm), they can have third-shift coworkers who buy eggrolls from them through other mutual friendships at work or through the posting they see in the lunchroom. On the eggroll order form, the lunch times for when to deliver are clearly marked so that later, when compiling the lists, the organizer can create a delivery schedule and have enough drivers throughout Friday.

The team set up to make deliveries are usually one of the women and a youth member. In the early years of the fundraiser, there were no youth who could drive yet, so they were not able to help make deliveries. The drivers are identified on Thursday and if there are additional helpers, they are assigned to help on Friday. Each of the drivers will use their own vehicle.

It used to be just one of the women, Yee, who made deliveries with her husband (until he had to leave for work on second shift) and she did not have Google maps to help her! She had to get written or verbal instructions for how to get to the other women's company jobs and trust that she would be able to deliver all of them on time. Now, Yee has access to good maps, but after doing this fundraiser for 11 years, it has become engrained in her memory how to travel to each of the women's company jobs and how to report to the front desk or to drop off eggrolls. This is something she only learned as a result of making these deliveries. In some companies, you can just drive right into the parking lot and have someone come meet you. In another, you have to report to the front office, and they will announce for someone to come pick it up from there. In another, the company is gated and so you are not allowed to enter the premises unless you have an employee key card. In these instances, Yee remembered:

Whenever I go deliver then, I just go to the front office...for example, at Hli's company, they are gated so that requires you to know who to call on the inside.

In an early instance, she recalls a challenge with making deliveries:

But then, Hli actually had a nickname and we didn't know that. We looked through their list of names...and whatever. We didn't know Hli's name. Then we saw this Mexican guy walk past and we say, "Hey, do you know her name?" and they didn't know either. And then, they just take a guess that it was Hli and called her over.

However, she learned how to work with the receptionist at the front office and she said:

So next time, we go deliver to the company, we know and there is no trouble. When we go, we can call the right name. And for whoever is going to deliver, we can tell them to make sure they have the right name too. When I deliver, I just go to the front office and request for the office to page the person I need. The people in the office help and they page that "Hey, the eggrolls have been delivered."

For Yee, food delivery was part of a learning process:

In the beginning, we didn't know how to do this so we were nervous about delivering but people have ordered food like pizza and other food to be delivered, right? However, before we knew this, we were not sure how to deliver eggrolls because we were not sure about the regulations at work about delivering food. After we learned that other businesses delivered food and that people order food all the time at work to be delivered, we gained this knowledge and learned something.

The job of delivering eggrolls continues throughout the day. The main communication is through the phone so it is important to have the battery fully charged and to pick up calls constantly because once you are out on the road, if the other women at the house need more ingredients or need you to pick up their kids from school (because things at the fundraiser are running slightly behind), then your phone is constantly ringing and you're on the road for hours. Therefore, it is vital that there are multiple drivers, at least two, making deliveries throughout the day, especially for times that are closer together because many unplanned events happen throughout the day and the women still have their children to feed and babysit, and so arrangements are also being made throughout the day. Half of the day is gone by 1pm after multiple deliveries have been made and there are only a couple more locations awaiting deliveries.

Part IV: Closing up shop

The house at this point is full of dishes stacked high, the smell of oil is thick in the air and on the tables, paper towels soaked with oil lie cold in the aluminum trays, the floors are sprinkled with bits of eggroll wrapper because the women have been eating one by one as the day started and not having time to eat a full meal in between the preparations and cooking. On the tables lie some leftover eggrolls that were overcooked or didn't make it in the first run of the trial while testing the oil. Clear vermicelli noodles have stuck to the aprons and t-shirts of the women the entire day because they have had little time to go to the bathroom or even sit still for five minutes. Residue from the eggroll filling covers their fingers.

After all the deliveries have been completed, at least two women will stay until the end to clean up, along with any of the women who could not help in the morning because they had to work their first-shift job. They start washing dishes because there is no other space to lay anything else down. Teams of women scrub the residue of the filling from the bottom of the mixing pans. They have to wash these larger mixing bowls first so that all the other smaller dishes can be placed in them to be carried. There are numerous dishes that various women volunteered to bring so everyone will sort through them after all the dishes have been washed and wiped dry.

The women who have been there all day so far are finally relieved to go home. The process of cleaning up will usually take until 6pm. All the women who need to go back to their families and make dinner for them will just bring eggrolls. They will go home, clean their house, watch their kids or grandchildren, and finally respond to all their missed phone calls and listen to the voice messages of family and friends who called that day.

Chapter 2: The Hmong American Eggroll as a Symbol for Community Resistance

Introduction

One of my main motivations for doing this project was to record the contributions of Hmong women to the church. As I talked with these women, whether arriving at their homes late after they had fed their children or in the middle of a humid, Wisconsin summer while they were selling produce at the farmers' market, they always had a story to tell me. While documenting the women's roles in the fundraiser, it became apparent that this was a site through which I could begin to analyze the displacement, labor, and economic conditions that shape the Hmong American experience. The eggroll embodies the Hmong American experience as refugees in the United States and for this reason, I argue that the eggroll is a Hmong American food and more broadly, a symbol of Hmong women's labor and survival as refugees in the United States.

The fundraiser is a practice of survival because it is by these women's unpaid labor for the church that we can see how vital community ties are in sustaining a sense of kinship in the Hmong diaspora. Hmong people were displaced due to war and the formation of community in the United States was deeply tied to federal refugee-resettlement policies aimed to disperse Hmong refugees. Although this was the intent, the secondary migration patterns of Hmong populations concentrated in specific states and regions of the United States suggests a more multifaceted process of reconstructing community. In the United States, the Hmong church represents a new site for building community and still reflects the central role of family and kinship ties, for Hmong refugee communities. In the church, the Hmong women are key players in reproducing these family and kinship ties, and through their fundraiser, they help to secure the church as a community space and are reinforcing the women's role in providing the physical and emotional labor in taking care of the (church) family.

Yosso's concept of community cultural wealth centers alternative forms of cultural capital that communities of color embody to resist and survive. Using Yosso's concept, I highlight the value of the women's labor to the continued survival of Hmong refugee communities, like those of other Southeast Asian refugees, who have been displaced due to war and who continue to resist erasures from U.S. history and institutionalized oppression through the government's welfare state that continues to enact racialized economic politics against communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities. In particular, Hmong women's labor in the fundraiser shows how they have fostered knowledge and skills to achieve their goal in raising money for their church every year. This achievement displays community cultural wealth and how their labor benefits themselves and their church.

In the Hmong church, women are using their social and family ties to sustain their community. Indeed, some of the women have already stated that church is defined for them as their family. In this church, Paj Hnub views the others as family and told me:

... We are family and we need to learn to love and respect each other... we come together to be sisters and brothers. We need to love each other like this even though we first came as strangers.

Paj Hnub joined the church after her husband sought prayer and counseling for a sickness from the pastor. As a couple, they were among the few members in their kin network to convert to Christianity so seeking family in this church was important to her.

For another woman, Hli, who was divorced, church provided a safe haven because the stigma of divorced women in the Hmong kinship structure isolated her from reaching out for support in the community. The backgrounds of these women create nuanced understanding of first-generation Hmong American women's experiences. Their fundraiser is an act of not just reconstructing community ties with other Hmong families and elders but also of their survival in

the United States and displacement from their homelands in Laos. Altogether, this fundraiser further reveals the hard work that women do for the church and the social and economic conditions in which they do it.

Community cultural wealth helps me to capture the contributions of Hmong women's unpaid labor to their church by centering their knowledge as resistance work. I will look at three alternative forms of cultural capital: familial, social, and resistant. Familial capital represents the cultural knowledge nurtured among family that carries a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. This form of capital holds significance for expanding the concept of family to include a broader understanding of kinship. Social capital represents the networks of people and community resources. This is significant to highlight because peers and social contacts can provide vital support when navigating unfamiliar social institutions. Resistant capital is the knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

The fundraiser served as a vital link between these women's realms of work in the church and at their company jobs. One key argument is that the women's labor, viewed through the lens of the fundraiser, remains crucial and immensely beneficial to their church. The women have been successful in marketing their eggrolls to their co-workers for eleven years. This is an immense task, but the women have adapted ingredients to create a flavor that they can keep selling to their co-workers, while sharing stories about the Hmong American experience.

So is the eggroll a *Hmong American* food?

My first thought when I learned about the numerous tasks that the Hmong women had to do in the fundraiser was that the fundraiser represents these women's Hmong American experience. The eggroll is not a dish included in traditional Hmong cuisine, according to the women, who collectively agreed that the Hmong most likely encountered eggrolls in the United

States. I argue that the eggroll is an emblematic representation of Hmong American cuisine. The Hmong American experience is displayed through the adaptation of ingredients, where chicken-centric values in Hmong culinary practices meet the mainstream American value for fried foods.

Chicken is a particularly key figure and ingredient in traditional Hmong practices both in Laos and still in the United States. They are often used to help heal the sick, divine providence through a shaman, and for assurance of good fortune. For many Hmong, the chicken has an important role in the spiritual realms of birth, soul-calling, naming, marriage, and death rituals.⁴⁰ To select chicken as a main ingredient for the eggroll filling is therefore, a Hmong foodway because of its significance to the Hmong way of life.

The recipe for these eggrolls has evolved and the changes reflect how the women have fostered knowledge about mixing ingredients and experimented to create a balance between flavor and texture in their eggrolls to have the perfect *Hmong American* eggroll. In the beginning, the women used to offer four different options: three kinds of protein (chicken, pork, beef) and one vegetarian (no protein). They embraced all these options because they were aware of the different dietary preferences of many working- and middle-class Americans. However, they quickly learned after a couple of years that providing a wide range of options was overwhelming and unsustainable for their small group. In the years to come, they would only offer chicken or vegetarian eggrolls. In one year, they added potatoes to their filling and they quickly took that ingredient out the following year when there wasn't much interest among their customers. Also, the quality of the wrappers went through changes as the women were learning the texture of different brands of eggroll wrappers. They eventually settled on a slightly more expensive brand because they wanted to have a good balance between the complexion, thickness,

⁴⁰ Sami Scriptor and Sheng Yang, *Cooking from the Heart: The Hmong Kitchen in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). 93.

and crispiness of the wrapper. Sheng gave me her perspective on the taste of Hmong American food:

There are Hmong flavors...If someone asked me this question, I would ask them, “Okay, do you want to know about modern Hmong food taste or do you want to know about traditional Hmong taste?” ...Because the Hmong modern in this country, it’s more like food that is tasty. But traditional Hmong back in the old days, or even those currently living in Laos in the mountains and those living in the city and still haven’t integrated, those people, I think that food, it is more plain. This is because they probably don’t have cooking oil, salt, or all kinds of you know, oyster sauce, to make it tastier and all that. You know? They’re more plain. If they want to eat vegetables, they just pick it from their garden and it’s fresh. They wash it and boil, that’s it. If they want to eat mushrooms, they just pick it from its stem, wash it and boil too. So it’s just like this and it’s plain.

She concluded, “Yes, it’s American. If you and I go to Laos, you won’t find eggrolls to eat.”

Sheng’s conclusion that eggrolls were not a common food in traditional Hmong cuisine consumed in Laos indicates that the eggrolls they make are indeed a creation symbolic of a Hmong American food. In particular, Sheng states that traditional Hmong food is simple, less salty, and boiled. In contrast, modern Hmong food is saltier and cooked with oil. Therefore, the fundraiser is a representation of the adaptations of Hmong cuisine and all these changes in their recipe reflect an emerging Hmong American culinary practice converging with the mainstream American diet: It’s chicken. It’s fried. It’s convenient.

The *process* through which the women organize the fundraiser makes the eggroll and this fundraiser a Hmong American experience. Hmong women continue to participate in the fundraiser because of their ties to their church community. This fundraiser has become a commitment that transcends monetary gain. I argue that there is a Hmong way of practicing commitment and making sacrifices for one’s family and the church. In her *Amerasia Journal* article, “Hmong Means ‘Free,’ or Does it?: Memoirs of the Hmong Dead,” Pa Xiong, former MA student, argued that to relentlessly help family and close relatives is a *Hmong* practice of

commitment.⁴¹ Xiong stated that the reason why her mother is willing to financially support their extended family members is that they are Hmong. The commitment to the fundraiser every year is an extension of this practice for these women who have created social ties through the church.

The process of the eggroll fundraiser offers a lens through which to examine the development of a Hmong American culinary practice unique to these women's experiences within and outside of the church. The fundraiser as an activity for the women requires much preparation. This is similar to other Hmong gatherings where women often work together preparing the meals for their families and extended relatives. The implementation of this structure to the eggroll fundraiser is an example of how Hmong values of community and food travel with them. However, the women's engagement in this practice is not detached from the gendered expectations with patriarchal Hmong and U.S. family structures, which ascribes domestic work and cooking duties to women in the household. Although, the women still face these gendered expectations within their family and community systems, their relentless commitment to the fundraiser should be seen as more than just their acceptance of an oppressive system, but to shift the narrative and see how these women are utilizing their cultural capital within a patriarchal family context. The inception of the idea of using the eggroll particularly shows how these women are fostering their community cultural wealth.

Why use the Eggroll?

This was a question I asked the Hmong women, and although their answers were inconclusive, several explanations have emerged. The women noted: 1) *Familiarity*: everyone is familiar with what an eggroll is, therefore the women would not have to prioritize their marketing strategies to sell the idea of it to others; 2) *Versatility*: while there is a consensus that

⁴¹ Pa Xiong, "Hmong Means Free, or Does It?," *Amerasia Journal* 28, no. 3 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.28.3.m33t6324qt187pxw>.

eggrolls weren't a popular food in the mainstream, it was a versatile dish because the women could create their own fillings; 3) *Short-term*: eggrolls are appealing as a fundraising item because once you finish cooking them, there aren't any leftovers that would be a burden to store or maintain; 4) *Common ingredients*: the women were already familiar with the ingredients in eggrolls that they'd eaten at Chinese restaurants, so they knew it wouldn't be difficult to make and they already had access to the ingredients because they are common in Hmong American home kitchens.

To better understand the motivation behind choosing the eggroll as the item for their church fundraiser, I will explore each of these factors separately. The first explanation is that the eggroll is already a familiar food, which reduces the work that the women need to do in finding customers to buy their eggrolls. For example, Hli cited the general familiarity of eggrolls as one reason why an eggroll fundraiser would be successful:

One thing about this is the recognition. [An] eggroll is something everyone [is]are familiar with. This makes it easier to communicate because if you wanted [to] sell eggrolls, you didn't need to explain too much about what it was to other people. I didn't need to tell them all the ingredients in our eggrolls when I was taking orders.

Dawb perceived eggrolls as already highly desirable:

[The] women at the church..., they already know how to make their own eggrolls because they cook for their families. Eggroll is one of the foods, that a comfort food, I think I can say that, eggroll is a comfort food for a lot of Hmong people. And Hmong people love to eat eggroll. So, we knew when we came together to talk about fundraising ideas, majority of my women would say, let's just make eggrolls, we know that it will sell. We know people love them. At least we know that Hmong community loves eggrolls. So, let's do what we know, and hopefully other people will catch on. We ran with the idea and it worked for us!

Contrary to Dawb's comment that the Hmong community would be the envisioned consumers, the fundraiser became more popular among non-Hmong co-workers. Most of the co-workers at the women's companies were people of color; however, White co-workers also became

interested in buying eggrolls from them once they sampled one. White co-workers were usually in managerial positions, which most of the women were not. When the eggrolls became a success among the women's co-workers, they worked hard to adapt their recipes and find strategies to sustain the fundraiser for the future.

Making this decision and coming to these conclusions shows how Dawb used her familial capital to help her rationalize using the eggroll. She recognized that the women in her church would be able to achieve their fundraising goal if they did something they already knew how to do, which was cooking and making eggrolls. Although they had never fundraised before, she was hopeful the idea to sell eggrolls would work and it did!

The second reason for selecting the eggroll was because it is a versatile food, allowing the women to create flavors according to their own preferences. Many of them knew how to make eggrolls from watching other women in their lives make them for various social events and public events like farmers' markets, where Hmong vendors were selling eggrolls to the general public, usually white people. They saw the eggroll, then, as a template for their own ideas, where they could create a product with a taste that they liked and keep making it better over time. There was never a recipe written for the eggroll filling because, every time, the flavors would be different according to whoever was making the mix that year for the fundraiser. They all had different preferences for the balance of flavors in the filling. Some liked the taste with more soy sauce, while others preferred to have it taste less salty in order to complement the high concentration of sodium in the dipping sauce. As a result, a recipe for the mixture was never the same every year. All the women agreed that they only knew how to make the mixture by memory because they would adjust it according to their own taste preferences. They were

making eggrolls that they liked and in doing this, they created a unique flavor profile for themselves as a church and as Hmong women. Yee described the overall process:

But for us Hmong, we aren't cheap with our ingredients. I am not judging them. In my opinion, based on the fundraiser that I do with these women, we only use the best ingredients, we make our meat look good, and we like to use many different ingredients to make it good because you know, we are doing this and they are paying for it. When I think about the restaurants, like the buffets and other places where you order food, they don't add many ingredients. They only use cabbage, noodles, carrots. That's it! When you eat it, it only tastes sour and their cabbage, they have thick cuts. When we make ours, we cut our cabbage thin so that it can mix well with the noodles and wrap tightly together. Although some may not be crunchy on the outside, the inside is tightly wrapped and when you eat it, it tastes fresh. This is our way of making it. We only do it this way and use only the best ingredients and foods to make it because it should be worth the money that we are asking other people to help buy it for.

For Yee, the use of fresh ingredients was a factor that distinguished their eggrolls from other businesses. She emphasized that using fresh ingredients was also a *Hmong* practice which makes the eggrolls taste better and keeps their customers buying more in the future.

The fundraiser had a short-term timeline, and this made it more convenient for the women, who already had busy lives outside of their church. When they first discussed the holding a fundraiser, they had talked about the possibility of selling non-food items like aprons. However, they quickly learned that it was challenging to persuade customers to purchase aprons in bulk quantities because there was low demand for more than one or two. Also, their customers were unlikely to purchase aprons every year because they would not have a need for new ones that quickly. Therefore, when the idea of making eggrolls arose, there was consensus that this could be an annual project that would garner interest each time. The cleanup is convenient for the women because they did not need to find storage space for any leftover product, unlike boxes of unopened aprons which would eventually end up sitting in someone's garage or living room for the rest of the year. Although the work required to set up and conduct such a large-scale fundraiser was demanding for the small group of women, they believed that it would be

worthwhile because they could finish without leftovers and not have to be concerned about any long-term implications.

Lastly, all the ingredients in the eggroll filling were ones that they were already using in their daily lives. Since ingredients such as carrots, cabbage, chicken, and soy sauce were common in their Hmong American kitchens, they were confident about making eggrolls that would taste good! In addition, they were already making eggrolls for various social events in the community and for their families. Ingredients such as chicken, cabbage, carrots, and soy sauce were versatile and used in many different dishes, so their uses were wide-ranging. Therefore, extending these flavors to eggrolls was not a stretch, and as a matter of fact, it was an adaptation that the women used in making eggrolls based on their own taste preferences and knowledge of what ingredients combined together would create more vibrant flavors. They knew what these flavors would taste like because they were already using them in their daily meals.

All the decisions and different experiments involved in making the *perfect* eggroll to sell show that the women are innovative in their approach to finding ways to make this their own thing but also to make it work. They are thinking about who is going to buy their product while also considering the resources they have access to (labor, ingredients, supplies). All this shows that these women are methodical yet flexible. Their decision-making process regarding what kind of ingredients and materials are best to use is helping the women cultivate more social capital, as evidenced by how they have achieved their goal in raising funds for their church. The women have attracted loyal supporters and fostered social capital, expanding their social networks to those at their workplaces and even one of their husband's companies as well as other individuals in the Hmong community. This eggroll reflects their social and economic condition

as first-generation Hmong American women and therefore, I argue, is their creation of a Hmong American project.

Kinship ties within the Hmong Church

The Hmong women's eggroll fundraiser is important as a site that reveals how much unpaid work they have to do as women for their families and the larger community. The kinship ties that the women created in their church community have also reinforced their commitment to do the fundraiser every year. The Hmong have continued to hold strong family and community ties, evidenced through the secondary migration trends, and the formation of kinship within church is an emerging space for how Hmong in diaspora are continually negotiating what "family" entails. In my project, I highlight that the women's work in their church is an example of gendered labor because it is an extension of their ascribed roles as caretakers for "family."

The women have gained skills and knowledge through organizing the fundraiser, and these skills have become useful for themselves, but also for the larger Hmong community. In one of my interviews, I learned how the skills gained from doing these fundraisers over time have translated into strengthened communal ties outside the church. Yee explained,

We were all beginners in the women's ministry and none of us had ever attempted to make large quantities of eggrolls before. However, we wanted to try. We had to start from the beginning and learn how to estimate ingredients.

Over time, she became a key leader in the community and had influence among other women who were non-Christians. She described her experience in her clan⁴²:

The Hmong women in my clan...they know I am a Christian and that I've participated in these eggroll fundraisers with my church. They have asked me for help. I have helped them do fundraisers 2-3 times now. They will ask me, "You have organized these eggroll fundraisers before, so you have the knowledge. You have to help us, okay?" Although

⁴² Hmong utilize a clan system that is based on the last name. There are 18 recognized clans in the Hmong community. The purpose of the clan system is to promote social cohesion and serve as mediators when conflict arise within families or relatives in the clan. They also support clan community events such as those related to traditional religious ceremonies (blessings, soul-calling). One family within the clan is selected to be the leader of the clan.

these women have made eggrolls before to eat and for large events, they have never done this before as a fundraiser and so they are unsure about how to start so that is why they ask me for help.

In particular, she explained her role:

At that time, the secretary will give me the money to buy the ingredients. She was previously treasurer but was transitioning into secretary, so she still had the money. She would give me money and we would go shopping for the ingredients together. I would also go help them make eggrolls and when I go, I would bring my own things and even donate anything I can give like ingredients and things.⁴³

Overall, she informed me that her skills were useful for the other women:

When I go help them, I teach them how to run their fundraiser. They are all smart women with much more capabilities and skills, but they just have never done a fundraiser so that's why they need someone with experience.

Not only does the women's participation in the fundraiser raise the stakes of women's labor in the church but also the level of transferability of their skills and knowledge to the larger Hmong community. Therefore, the women's labor for their church can also be considered a form of reproducing kinship ties in the Hmong community. These Hmong women are helping other Hmong women to learn new skills and provide for their families. However, this act of community service is not supplemental to the church or to the larger Hmong community. The Hmong women's unpaid acts of care are vital to fostering social capital through strengthening kinship ties in the church community as well as sustaining the church for the future, in providing both monetary and social support in the long-term.

Sharing information about the fundraiser is an act that displays both social and familial capital. For example, the other women in the clan family perceived Yee as someone who is knowledgeable and has proficient skills in successful fundraising. I argue that Yee has social capital as a result of her role in the fundraiser, which raised the visibility of her social status

⁴³ She had also said, "At that time, it was the leader in our clan, she was the one who asked me for help because I had done fundraisers before. I tell them how to make it and I don't hide any details."

among her peers. Additionally, her visibility in the larger Hmong community as part of the clan leader family was beneficial to her outreach as a Hmong woman, because other women requested her expertise. Therefore, Yee's role in the fundraiser as both a member in a church and a clan leader's family, ultimately, in Yee's perspective, helped her display the qualities of Hmong people, in particular Hmong women in church. Yee's influence in her community helped her share insider knowledge about fundraising while also fostering social ties with the clan families. This was an important benefit to the church because Yee openly shared her knowledge with the other women, Christian or non-Christian, which increased the visibility of the church and particularly the resourcefulness of the women in the church.

The Hmong women's fundraiser as a lens has also revealed that their labor can be viewed as acts of resistance to their displacement from their homeland way of life in Laos and having to reconstruct meanings of community in the United States. When approached by their co-workers for information about the Hmong, one woman that I interviewed showed confidence in representing Hmong people through the perspective of being Hmong.

Sheng, who worked at a company job, faced ignorant co-workers who were unaware of Hmong people in Wisconsin. She used her voice to educate them about the U.S. military and the displacement of Hmong people. For example, when annoyed at a co-worker for being so ignorant, Sheng said:

I tell them that I am Hmong and I came from Laos to the United States. There are some who even ask why are the Hmong here in the U.S.? I tell them, "It's because of America! It's because they came and started a war in Laos. They lost so they ran back. Then the Lao government didn't want Hmong people after the war, and Hmong people lost their homeland.

We had no other option than to follow the U.S. and now that's why we are here in the U.S.! When I say this, my co-workers say, "Oh, we didn't know that's why Hmong people are here." I just tell them, "Dude, learn your history."

There are some who just walk away and don't come back to talk to us so hopefully they are going to learn their history. There are some who keep thinking that we

are Chinese or why Hmong people are here in the U.S. They don't know why so they keep asking us. I just think, you know, if you don't know, just go look up history, the Secret War. Then you will know why we are here. We didn't just come here because we wanted to. We are here because of America!

For Sheng, it was important to educate her co-worker about the Hmong perspective because of the negative perception of Asian immigrants and refugees in the United States. People of color have always faced microaggression at work and in their communities, leading some to bear the burden of educating people about the colonial and racist legacy of the United States.

Sheng's words display resistant capital because she challenged the racist undertones spoken by a co-worker that stem from the perception of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners. Recognizing her own authority, Sheng used the term, "Secret War" to reclaim Hmong history because of all the displacement that Hmong people have gone through. I would even argue that using this term is an act of survival in the United States because it challenges the role of the United States as the savior and gives voice to Hmong refugee experiences.

Sheng's act of resistance benefits the church, much like how Yee has garnered good will and visibility by educating her Hmong clan community about eggroll fundraising. Instead of educating Hmong people, Sheng is teaching her white co-workers about the Hmong. Her verbal response is an act of resistance to the erasure of her Hmong identity at her workplace. She is vocal and will not be silenced.

“My Company”: The value of wage-paid labor in Hmong women's lives

The women's relationship to their work is influenced by their perceptions of the value of their work to themselves and their families. The Hmong women that I interviewed referred to their place of employment as their company and I will continue to use this language to refer to their workplace. This term indicates the intimate relation they perceive towards their work. It is important to center this in thinking about what work means to these women, considering how most of them have spent a great deal of their life since arriving in the United States doing labor-intensive assembly work at these companies.

When I asked the Hmong women about the level of importance of their work, Hli said it was more of a necessity for her family than a choice for herself:

For someone like me who is uneducated, I think if I did not have this job, I would not have a house to live in. This is why my job is important. But I don't like my job. They give you hard work, you stand all day, and they have such a strict schedule for me. However, this job is important to help take care of my family so for this reason, I would consider my job as something important.

Although her work is not enjoyable, Hli still considers her job significant because it gives to her the means to take care of her family's basic needs as a single mother and the sole income provider in her family.

Another woman, Dawb, who does not have a company job similarly told me that work is important to her because it helps her family and also contributes to society:

Work is always important. It doesn't matter what kind of work, any kind of work is important. A person who doesn't work doesn't have any purpose and they don't feel like they are productive or feel like they have anything important to contribute to their family and society...some that I work with who are older or have a disability, they cannot hold a regular job. They feel so bad about themselves because now they can't do anything...most people desire to work or have some kind of profession to be productive and contribute to family and society.

Dawb worked for a long-term care program in Wisconsin providing in-home care for predominantly disabled and elderly people. Like Hli, she sees her work as a contribution to family but also expands on the function of work outside of her family. It is clear that her interactions with the people she serves have informed her own values about work, influencing her to consider how aging affects one's capacity to work and to contribute to family and society.

The other seven women who have worked, or are currently working, at a company job, have taught me that developing intimate ties with their company does not necessarily mean the work environment is a positive experience. As a matter of fact, the work conditions they described in our interviews show me that they have difficult workplace environments where they face gender and racial prejudice from their co-workers and supervisors. The women make decisions to cope with the discriminatory and disrespectful remarks they receive, but they do not have the knowledge needed to address the situation in a way that would lead to tangible changes in their working conditions, as traditional forms of labor organizing have suggested. However, the Hmong women are not passively accepting the social control at their companies. They draw on different forms of cultural capital to cope with challenging working conditions.

Hmong women's company work was separate from that of their husbands, even if their husbands also did factory work. Prior to the war, Hmong families worked together in the home. They also worked outside doing farming, the main source of subsistence. Working in the United States has helped Hmong women establish independence. They have gained important skills from working with machinery that increased their knowledge about operating specialized equipment at their companies.

A look inside the company jobs

After arriving in the United States, the work profiles of the Hmong women were more isolated due to strictly controlled work schedules, their physical confinement at their machines, and lack of fluency in English. Overall, the women worked at companies where they sorted and packed plastic and metal parts for cars, trucks, heavy construction and agricultural equipment, and electronics. Most held positions as machine operators and packagers: these jobs entailed working with industrial machines that required quick inspection and manual sorting of the parts that pour onto a table before they are packed into shipping boxes.

Hmong women experience discrimination at their workplaces and receive little support from their companies because of the automated nature of their work that isolates workers from socializing. For example, Paj Hnub, who worked as a machine operator, recalled how her co-workers first perceived her as an immigrant. She described this memory of her workplace:

When I first started working there, they do not like me. This is because I was different than other people. I know that they hire people like me is because they need workers. They have to hire and train more people even if they don't like us or want us to do it.

She used the term *txawv* to describe that she was *different* from her co-workers, who were more fluent in English. She felt that they looked down on her as a Hmong refugee woman with limited English skills but her experience taught her that cheap labor is still valuable labor. Despite her co-workers' opinions of her, she was determined to work hard at the company for her long-term survival, as she said,

In my opinion, the lead⁴⁴ is not paying me, I have to do the best I can when they want to argue or are upset at me. I don't talk back to them. I just say "sorry" or something like that, you know, even when they are the ones in the wrong. I will say, "Sorry, I did not know." Then maybe, they might even look at you after that and think, "She's probably

⁴⁴ "Lead" refers to supervisor

too *ruam*⁴⁵ [stupid] I don't even want to yell at her." They might even start to *hlob koj* [pity you] because of that; they think you are too *ruam* and not see the point in blaming you!

This strategy that she adopted allowed her to make the best of a challenging situation. Her endurance in this kind of hostile work environment is her form of resistance. I argue that her commitment to work despite the micro-aggressions from her co-workers is reflective of the larger experiences of immigrants, refugees, and people of color in the United States who have continuously fought to survive in hostile work environments. Her supervisor's social control is also exhibited in the shifting work schedule that makes it difficult to negotiate about workload without prior notice. Paj Hnub described the arduous nature of her job as a machine operator, working with:

All different kinds of machines. The supervisors tell you how to use them and you just do it. You mostly are standing there waiting for the parts to come and then you move on to the next one. This is a back and forth process. You get one machine assigned but they always change. One time it will be this machine. The next day, it will be a different machine. They like to change it up on you. You work on this machine, you see? And then, you move on to the next machine and then the next. You learn to work on about two or three different machines.

Her role as a machine operator entails working on more than one machine during her shift due to her supervisor's abuse of power. To avoid conflict with the supervisor, who sets the ever-changing day-to-day work schedule, she complies with her assigned work and endures the unequal treatment.

Hli, who worked at a different company, similarly described her work handling multiple machines by herself:

My supervisor makes me work every other weekend. I have to do three or four machines by myself! The other co-workers they don't even have to do that...my supervisors, they don't care about you. I tell them it is too many machines for me but they don't even send help until the end of the day. If you are lucky, one of the machines might die and then I

⁴⁵ *Ruam* can be stupid but depending on context and even consulting with Hmong women, it can vary in its meaning as it is said here. I applied the translation to "stupid" but others can also understand it as "naïve" "uneducated"

only have to work on three instead of four. If you are not lucky, and no machines dies, then you have to constantly be sorting and packing back and forth...if I have machines with the fast-moving parts, then I can't even have lunch. If I have a lot of machines but they are slow ones, then I can leave large buckets under the machine so the parts can fall into it and I can come back after lunch to work on packing them.

Hli's role as a packager requires quick hands to sort through piles of plastic parts. Although she tries to speak up about her unequal workload, her supervisors disregard her concerns and she is left to do all the work that, it seems, her other co-workers deem undesirable and, as in the case of Paj Hnub, Hli's day-to-day assignments are also dictated by her supervisor.

Although most of my interviewees worked as machine operators, Sheng discussed her position as a quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) inspector which, though also demanding, gave her some control over her work:

My main tasks are to inspect the very first piece of the motor that I get from the technician for a new part of the motor. They are the ones who work on the new piece and they have to fix it before they hand it over to me. I have to go through the computer and match their piece to the ones online to make sure that it matches. They also have to bring me a sheet of paper that tells me the number for the part so I can find the blueprint of it in the computer.

Sheng's knowledge about the caliper, proficient use of the company computers, and ability to interpret blueprint drawings distinguishes her skill set from the rest of the Hmong women working in companies. However, her experiences as an Asian woman showed she had to deal with gender-based prejudice from her mostly White, male co-workers. That's why, she said,

When I print a copy of the blueprint out, I have to match it by looking to make sure that their piece is like the blueprint. I cannot just look at it quickly, I have to really make sure that it's the same. I also have to use a caliper to measure the part and really inspect the part well to make sure it's not too short or anything else wrong.

In the past, technicians have disregarded her feedback and therefore, she has exerted more authority by presenting greater justification for her review by conducting her inspections thoroughly for every part.

Having a college degree and work background as a seamstress allowed Sheng to apply for this particular position at her company. When Sheng worked at the company, her task of inspection was different from the jobs of the other women because it requires her to interact with the technicians, whereas the other women primarily work with machines. Her position as inspector gave her a sense of control over her work because she was allowed to make decisions. She approved new parts from technicians once she determined there were no measurement errors. She worked for her company for four years before leaving to pursue full-time her side business sewing. She could afford to leave her company because she had the opportunity to do work that she enjoyed; in other words, she had options for work due to her education and background experiences. This was not the case for most of the other women who were working in the companies.

Hmong women who work in the companies often arrive without any work experience or prior education, so leaving their work is matter of survival, not personal preference. However, those who do have options can take their skills elsewhere, like Sheng. This is significant to note because Hmong women workers, like other low-wage workers, are not the passive laborers that is the dominant perception of immigrant, low-wage factory and service workers.

Resistance arising amidst highly socially controlled work environments

Another part of the work environment important to shaping Hmong women's work experiences was their social interactions with co-workers and supervisors. These interactions, often limited, influence the women's perspectives about the value of their work and their identities as Hmong American women. Paj Hnub said her lead (supervisor) only acknowledged her work ethic when it made him look good. She explained,

But in the end, you just have to try to do good things and be a good person to them and maybe they will see you as a good person who is doing their job well. If their supervisor,

another lead, or others no matter the young or old see that they are doing a good job, they will offer all their praises to them. Only then they will start to publicly tell other people that you are a good worker. They will say, “Look at her, she is a really good worker!” This is when they will talk about you. Whenever there is a new person, whether they are a Hmong or White person, they will talk about you and say, “This woman here, she is a really good worker!” This is what they will say.

For her, the value of her work is contingent on the acknowledgement by her lead. She applied for the job because she knew a Hmong friend was working there. It was important to her that she was a good worker so her friend’s reputation at the company would remain intact. This sense of obligation to her friend added more value to the work she was doing at the company because she did not want to let her friend down.

Furthermore, when she considered her relation to her lead, who regularly treats her with disrespect, she remains hopeful about seeing improvement in the future, as she states,

If you give it enough time, like a long time... first, they might perceive you as someone who is really *ruam* [stupid] and think towards you that “Oh, she looks like someone who is really *ruam* and we can put blame on her for anything.” When you don’t argue with them about anything, even when it’s their fault not yours, they will still complain about you. Later, if they feel embarrassed about it, they will come to you and apologize. They might even try to joke with you so that you are not upset at them. Then if you give it more time, like a long time, they may change their perception of you and see you as someone who is a good person, doesn’t argue with them, someone who likes their job.

Her ability to remain hopeful in her situation demonstrates aspirational capital. Since she values doing her job well, she remains focused on her work despite the disrespectful treatment by her supervisor.

I argue that her lead’s behavior reinforces the ideology of a “good worker” as someone who can be easily exploited and oppressed. Her inability to speak up, although clearly she has felt undervalued by her lead, is an example of how immigrant and refugee women have been oppressed under U.S. capitalism and the hierarchies of a racialized and gendered labor market.

However, Sheng's role as inspector gave her the opportunity for more workplace interactions with technicians. She described one of her interactions:

For example, there is an older white man who plays on his phone. He always has one finger just touching the phone screen. I will walk all around the floor and come back to see that he is still there. I'll tell him, "How come you are still in the same position? It looks like you haven't even moved! What are you looking at on your phone?" He says to me, "I don't have any work to do so I just look at my phone. What else am I supposed to do other than stand here?"...I'll come stand by him and talk like this for a little while and go back to do work.

Although their conversation was unrelated to work duties, the interaction with her co-worker demonstrated the greater flexibility of her position. She was usually stationed at a desk; however, when she was walking around the floor, she had some time to interact with workers.

I argue that Sheng has utilized her navigational capital to resist her co-worker's pushback to the authority granted to her as an inspector. Her social status at her company allowed her, in comparison to those women who worked as machine operators, to maneuver in the realm of work that is predominantly White and male. Working with technicians, who challenge her authority as a Hmong woman, can be a balancing act because of their perceptions about her leadership and skill level; however, her social position gives her agency to resist others' opinions and vocalize her own.

Hli, who works at the same company as Sheng, revealed that her job conditions limit her opportunities to interact with co-workers. Hli, who is a machine operator, explained:

In these machines, there are these parts that quickly fall out so if for example, I am taking a break to eat, then maybe if our parts are coming out at the same rate and you're here, then we can talk to each other. However, if the parts don't come out at the same rate, then everyone is on their own time schedule and they must quickly eat to get back so they can finish their work. There's just no time!

For her, the work environment offers little opportunity to develop social ties with her co-workers, and instead she is rushing to complete her workload. Her work conditions place her

under pressure; with little control over her workload and limited break time, she chooses to eat her lunch quickly and forgoes socializing. In instances where she has been unable to complete her work under these conditions, she has said,

When my supervisor tells me that I have bad parts, I say to them, “You giving me many machines and everything that I see is perfect. I do nothing wrong.” You see, they want you to sign a paper. I refused, “Nope! I refuse to sign the paper. I am not going to sign.” Just like that. The paper is for bad parts...I already told them...I am not a robot. I am a human being...I tell this straight to the supervisor, not in a bad way, just so they know that it’s too many machines.

Although she challenges her supervisor when he marks her down for incompleteness, she still faces consequences:

I got a hold ticket once. I went to work the next day and I didn’t care if I got a hold. My supervisor came to tell me that and I just tell them, “Well, with that many machines, it has to get a hold. I didn’t see it.” Then there’s nothing I can do...they tell me that I don’t get my end of the year bonus...they also take this away if you punch in late too...they not gonna pay you...this is their game. I have to be perfect to get my bonus! That’s the game they play. Stupid game!

I argue that her strict schedule is another way the company reinforces the “good worker” because her limited time shapes her behaviors and attitudes, making her adapt to a mentality that forces her to choose between eating lunch or getting penalized with a hold ticket. Threats to wages have been a common intimidation practice among low-wage workers⁴⁶ and in Hli’s situation, she was aware of the “games” that her company plays with her wages in order to diminish her dignity as a worker. Knowing she can lose wages, she still speaks up; however, this was only in the last few years. When she started working at her company ten years ago, she did not speak out.

Although she faces a difficult situation, Hli, I argue, relied on her cultural capital both to endure her workplace environment for ten years and resist intimidation by her supervisor regarding her wages. In particular, she displayed resistant capital through her verbal challenge to

⁴⁶ Milkman, *On Gender, Labor, and Inequality*. 47-72.

her supervisor when he presented her with the hold ticket. In strong disagreement, she voiced the injustice of her workload and inhumane treatment of workers like herself as “robots.”

As a senior employee of this company, Hli has formed one friendship with another Hmong woman co-worker. This friendship has proven to be a support for her in times when she has wanted to quit her company—her Hmong friend convinces her to stick it out together because work elsewhere (most likely another company job) may be even more difficult without knowing any other Hmong person there.

How the refugee is reproduced as the “good worker”

Prior to their resettlement in the United States, Hmong people were farmers with no formal education. As newcomers in the U.S. labor market, they represented an exploitable labor force since they were inexperienced and unfamiliar with working in wage paid labor. Their point of entry into the manufacturing industry was usually through word of mouth from other Hmong people in their immediate family or the community as a whole. Although Hmong families who arrived in the earlier years have had help from the U.S. government in transitioning to a new country, many of them have continued to live in poverty due to the conditions of resettlement. They were placed in highly segregated cities in the poorest, most marginalized urban neighborhoods where social tensions are high and the residents already living in these neighborhoods lack public resources. Therefore, the need to work and provide for their family’s well-being motivates Hmong people to seek out opportunities for employment.

The role of the U.S. government in Hmong women’s work has been crafted by the U.S. Resettlement Program’s primary concern: economic self-sufficiency for Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees arriving in the late 1970s. Since 1975, the United States has accepted over 300,000 Southeast Asian refugees. Through the Resettlement Program, refugees received

assistance while adjusting to their new homes. They also received skills training and other knowledge intended to help them attain economic self-sufficiency. Under the Refugee Act of 1980, annual evaluation and survey reports were mandated to Congress to measure the progress and success of refugees coming to the United States. Some of the key information collected included employment history and the use of social services.⁴⁷

The Office of Refugee Resettlement funded nationwide studies focused on Hmong resettlement, conducted between the fall of 1982 and the spring of 1983. A 1984 report on the resettlement experiences of Hmong refugees and in particular their employment examined economic strategies used by the Hmong and employment projects that proved successful for the Hmong. These projects included sewing, farming, grocery stores, and other social services and food service enterprises. At this time, the majority labor-force participation was influenced by age, gender, education and English-language speaking ability. The studies concluded that women were less likely to be employed than men, due to family responsibilities and childcare duties.⁴⁸

The Hmong family was the main economic unit in Laos,⁴⁹ but when they arrived in the United States, the Hmong had to forge community ties in a new country by using their existing kinship ties. The social structure of Hmong families in Laos was based on a clan system, and clans also served as a political and social organization for Hmong people. This structure is still relevant in the United States although it has less popularity among second-generation Hmong. Hmong families have relied on their own social networks to find better jobs, educational

⁴⁷ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 82.

⁴⁸ Simon Fass and Diana Bui, "The Hmong Resettlement Study. Volume II: Economic Development and Employment Projects." (Portland, 1984). 1-7.

⁴⁹ Nancy D. Donnelly, *Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994). 29-30.

opportunities, to get better welfare benefits, and to reunite with family and kin.⁵⁰ When Hmong families were first arriving, many of the employment opportunities either consisted of familiar farming or needle work, or temporary staffing agencies would connect Hmong people with low-wage manufacturing jobs.

This type of low-wage work that Hmong women do is also a part of the narrative of Asian immigrant and refugee women after the 1960s; Yen Le Espiritu describes how many Southeast Asians arriving after 1978 were more likely to be unemployed due to their perceived limitations in education, lack of transferable skills into the U.S. workforce, and lack of fluency in speaking English, which made them vulnerable as expendable laborers.⁵¹ Espiritu described these notions of expendable labor as a type of “gender logic” where industries that carry out more labor-intensive work will prefer to employ women because the employers presume that women’s labor is worth less pay compared to that of immigrant men. They also assume that women “do not mind dead-end jobs and are more suited physiologically to certain kinds of detailed and routine work.”⁵²

Expanding their Ethnic Identity

Sparked by the eggroll fundraiser, brief interactions between the women and their non-Hmong co-workers have opened small talk about the women’s ethnic identity. For some, their co-workers did not ask about their Hmong identity; however, others were asked to explain.

⁵⁰ Koltyk, *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. 41.

⁵¹ Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love*. 77.

⁵² *Ibid.* 89.

Scholars such as Chia Youyee Vang⁵³ and Melissa Borja⁵⁴ have suggested that ethnic identities are still important to community formation in Hmong populations and this is also the case with the Hmong women, whose ethnic identity is evolving to include Hmong *Christian* identity. Hmong Christianity as an emerging ethnic and religious identity in the late 20th century has not yet been explored in the current literature as a major site for new ways of forming Hmong kinship ties after war. The women I interviewed remarked that their ethnic identity was inclusive of their Christian beliefs, which suggests that Hmong ethnic identity has changing meanings for Christian and non-Christian communities.

For the Hmong women I interviewed, their Christian identity has been important at their companies. The changing identity has created some tension with Hmong co-workers who do not identify as Christian; these tensions become clear when the women ask for support for their eggroll fundraiser. One woman, Kabzuag, presented her perspective on her Hmong co-workers:

In the beginning, the Hmong people at my company did not help to buy and especially...and I don't really want to say it like this because it does not sound good to say, but especially those who are non-Christian, they are the ones who don't usually buy from us... They say, "We know how to make eggrolls like you so why are you charging one dozen for \$11-12? What is the reason?"

She attributed the tension between her and her Hmong co-workers to their religious differences. However, her tone of voice suggests a value judgement on her non-Christian Hmong co-workers who do not support the eggroll fundraiser. I argue that Kabzuag's perception of her Hmong co-workers shows that she valued learning new skills and saw fundraising as an opportunity to display her Hmong Christian identity at work through fundraising and participating in the larger American cultural practice of raising money for a cause. When it comes to her understanding of

⁵³ Vang, *Hmong America : Reconstructing Community in Diaspora*. 97-98.

⁵⁴ Melissa May Borja, "Speaking of Spirits: Oral History, Religious Change, and the Seen and Unseen Worlds of Hmong Americans," *The Oral History Review* 44, no. 1 (2012): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohw118>.

her ethnic identity, she used her Christian identity to explain why tensions could arise. She believed her identity as a Hmong Christian allowed her to have the knowledge to engage in fundraising as a new source for raising support for church, as she says,

Why do I say this? I think it is because they do not understand our purpose for the fundraiser. If they don't understand it, they won't buy. It is not because they don't care about helping me. They might not understand because they have never done a fundraiser before, so they don't know how to help somebody who is needing money and asking. When it comes to understanding "donations," this is where they don't know what it means.

Kabzuag provides an example of how Hmong women are expanding their understanding of their ethnic identity. Her Hmong Christian identity influenced how she saw her Hmong co-workers and herself. In particular, her explanation suggested that being a Christian enabled her to develop a new understanding of her social network with other people, possibly also Christians, who have experienced giving to a cause. I believe that she viewed her non-Christian Hmong co-workers as those who could benefit from learning how to fundraise since it represents another way of building community with one another—and when she says, “When it comes to understanding ‘donations,’ this is where they don't know what it means,” she points out a linguistic difference in Hmong and American conceptual understandings about money and charity. Based on my interpretation, she is showing me that Hmong Christians are adapting mainstream *American* values of giving money.

Even more, she also believes that reciprocity is an important aspect when helping one another out. She narrates an example between two co-workers, saying,

“Okay, we will help you.” In the end, they will support and when they have something to fundraise, like for their children's school fundraiser selling pizza or cookies or whatever they want me to order, I am always ordering from them too to support them and their children's school.

However, she also told me about the distinction between what causes non-Christian Hmong are willing or unwilling to donate to:

“...We need to help each other because we all have a need. So then they are the ones who mostly help support me. But again, for those who don't help, they don't help support anything. They are usually the Hmong non-Christian. Even if you have helped them before when they needed it, when it comes to yourself, they won't help you. Theirs is for the children's school and ours, I ask for church eggroll sale, but they still don't help.

She states that both groups, Christian and non-Christian Hmong, are making financial contributions to community causes. However, when it comes to *church* fundraising, Hmong non-Christians may be unwilling to contribute. She revealed that her non-Christian Hmong co-workers ask others to support their education-related fundraisers, yet they won't easily give money to her church fundraiser. In general, her perception of non-Christians as withholding support from her church fundraiser was a key difference when I asked about her relations with Hmong co-workers.

Hmong Christianity also embodied a solidaristic identity for resisting the stereotypes of Hmong people in Wisconsin and in the general public's view as passive and uncivilized people.⁵⁵ For Kabzuag, her Christian identity was deeply important to her ethnic identity. At work, she strongly believed that her actions would exemplify her Christian morals and values as a good person. When she started at her new company about a year ago, her white co-workers asked her why she was more outgoing compared to the other Hmong woman, and if this stemmed from her being Christian. She responded,

I don't think it's a Hmong culture thing because it's not. I think it's because of our parents and how our parents acted and then one just follows the other. This is not to be interpreted as our Hmong culture. I don't believe that Hmong culture is that restrictive.

⁵⁵ Hein, *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities*. 184-196.

Her explanation entails having to navigate the stereotypes about Hmong culture as oppressive and patriarchal compared to American (Christian) culture as liberal and progressive. This is an example of resistant capital because she was self-aware enough to challenge the assumptions of racial and gender inferiority of Hmong women and Hmong culture. She said, on behalf of and in solidarity with her Hmong woman co-worker,

They ask why she doesn't talk and if it's because she is not Christian. If I know they are not Christians, then I just answer them, "I only met her when I started working here. Since we are both here, that is how I know she works here and that she is Hmong. We are not close family although we are Hmong. That's all we share." You see, with them, it's not good to just say, "Yeah, it's because that woman is not a Christian or whatever." This is not a good response. Since we are Hmong, if we put each other down, that's not good.

Kabzuag's response to her co-workers shows her awareness of the importance of presenting Hmong people and their culture in a positive way; her response also shows that there is a lack of close relationship with other Hmong workers at her company. This could be due to the fact that Kabzuag had only worked at the company for a year at the time and therefore, lacked familiarity with the workplace and her co-workers.

Nonetheless, her realization that Hmong people were a minority at the company encouraged her to talk about Hmong people in Wisconsin to raise awareness. When her co-workers were curious about the Hmong people and their culture, they would come to her to ask questions. Therefore, I argue that she felt her representation of Hmong people and their culture to a non-Hmong group was important in influencing how outsiders would perceive Hmong people as a whole. Her inclination to present Hmong people in a positive way showed me that she was aware of the racial perceptions about Hmong people being uncivilized, un-American and non-Christian, but also the capitalistic notions of pitting people of color against each other, especially because her co-workers were White men.

It is clear that the women's experiences at work are mixed. Those who are allowed more flexibility in their work schedules can choose to interact with their co-workers compared to those who have limited time. When comparing the three women's experiences—one as the inspector and the other two as machine operators—their roles seem to influence their views of their companies' valuation of them as workers. While the inspector is able to exert some authority over her co-workers and find time to interact with them, the machine operators often find themselves restricted on time or confined to their machines. These differences show that the practices of this company, like others within the manufacturing industry, aim to reinforce “good” behaviors among workers in the bottom positions. This kind of tactic exploits the labor of immigrant and refugee women with limited English-speaking skills and little formal education. However, the women have shown that they are not passive and indeed, they have displayed cultural capital through enduring with a sense of hopefulness and voicing their opinions when they can.

Conclusion

Through the eggroll fundraiser, the Hmong women's work to keep community ties strong can be seen as a vital practice of survival and resistance. Their physical and emotional labor in the fundraiser makes their church a space where these women can have a sense of family. Belonging to the church is especially important for women who have limited choices in the Hmong community if they need support outside their husband's family or their own extended family. By doing this work in the church, they are reinforcing and negotiating Hmong values of family and community as well as redefining kinship networks.

As Hmong women, they have navigated unfamiliar social institutions of work and church; however, their existing knowledge and sense of kinship have helped them to develop new social skills and have elevated their church as a valuable institution for Hmong women's leadership in providing substantial income for the church. They have displayed their community cultural wealth as well as showing that Hmong women are capable, resourceful and able to achieve their goals in fundraising for their church. Most importantly, the Hmong women have achieved success through this fundraiser on their own terms, meaning that they were the ones defining the purpose of the fundraiser for themselves and their community.

Community formation in the Hmong diaspora is a complex process and also entails the negotiations of Hmong identity. These Hmong women have shown that Hmong *American* and Hmong *Christian* identities are emerging identities that they have had to negotiate as they worked in the fundraiser because of the perceptions of Hmong or Hmong Christians by the Hmong community or non-Hmong co-workers. Through their experiences of articulating their Hmong *American* or Hmong *Christian* identities to others, these women have nuanced the perception of Hmong in the United States as a static identity, especially for the first-generation

Hmong who, like many other immigrants and refugees, have more ethnic cultural knowledge than succeeding generations. I hope to expand our understanding of first-generation Hmong American women through the lens of this fundraiser because it reveals how they are negotiating their Hmong identities in the United States.

The fundraiser stands out as a meaningful Hmong American project for these Hmong women because it provides vital support to their church. They have gained knowledge and skills to benefit their fundraiser which benefits their church. They have taken an active role in educating their co-workers about Hmong history as well as educating other Hmong women about fundraising. All these acts have increased their visibility in the Hmong community, especially as representatives of the church.

It would be inaccurate however, to omit the real challenges of their doing such intensive labor for the church. It is not necessarily a “choice” because they are limited in resources and so all the women have to provide support. They have found the church, despite its imperfections, to be a space in which they can reconstruct kinship ties and define “family” for themselves. However, the labor it takes to sustain this community space is costly for them. It’s hard work. Dawb, who has supported the church fundraiser every year, offering her store as a site for making the eggrolls, tells me what it takes to keep community together:

I don’t think about what I enjoy or don’t enjoy at all because I don’t have time to think about it. Once everything is done and cleaned, I am so exhausted that I don’t want to do anything else.

Although the work to sustain their church is important, Dawb leaves me with the impression that this comes at a cost for her; however, it is one that she is willing to take on every year.

In a similar manner, the work that these women do at their company jobs, where they recruit most of their customers for the fundraiser, is also hard work. Hli, who has worked at her company for longer than the fundraiser has been held, said to me about her work:

I'm so tired that I see stars...when I lift my eyes, I see sparkles. They are black, flying above me.

As participants in the fundraiser, Dawb and Hli tell me how much effort is required to keep their community together, revealing the relentless physical and emotional labor.

This eggroll fundraiser is just one story of how Hmong women are working to maintain community. These strong women, who have deep commitments to their community, are making great strides to help future generations develop a strong sense of community in the United States.

As Kabzuag charged me to do:

I hope what I said, that you can learn, and someone will hear good things.

Hearing this, I felt our interview shift to her as my Auntie and me as her niece, and I was listening to her wish not just for me but for all future generations, who need to hear about the bravery and strength of their mothers and aunts.

Appendix I: Consent Forms

(English Version)

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong Women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community

Maliya Lor, Master's Student from Asian American Studies Department and Community Health Sciences Department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a participant in this study because you identify as a member of this church's women's ministry who has participated in at least one eggroll fundraising event. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to analyze how Hmong women are engaging in foodways within church to reimagine community within and outside church, as well as to examine the ways in which they are shaping and sustaining community. The main site of my research will be a church in Wisconsin. By conducting oral history interviews with Hmong women who are members of the church's women's ministry, I plan to explore the ways in which immigrant women have been organizing in church and reimagining community in Wisconsin. I hope to learn about their perspectives on ethnic foodways (ideas and practices related to food), community, and the role food plays in their lives. These interviews will inform my research and analysis of ethnic foodways in Wisconsin.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in a private in-person interview that will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.
- During the interview, the questions will focus on your:
 - Knowledge of and experience in church eggroll fundraising
 - Perspective on community within church and in other social networks
 - Daily life, including workplace
 - For example:
 - How are women in church building community through eggroll fundraising?
 - How do women organize themselves and others to participate?
- All interviews will occur in a place of your preference. This can be your home, a private room or office, or at church.

- The interviews will be recorded. You can choose not to have your interview digitally recorded.
- You may choose to use an alternative identifier instead of your actual name.
- The interview(s) will only be used for this study. You can omit any information that you do not want to be included in the study. If any information from your interview(s) is used in future research, I will ask for your full consent before moving forward.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in interviews will take a total of approximately one hour and thirty minutes. If clarification or additional information is needed, there may be an additional follow-up interview that takes approximately one hour. The interviews will take place during the Summer and Fall (July, August, or September) of 2018, depending on the availability of the interviewees.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

You will be asked questions that involve sharing stories and experiences from your personal life, which may potentially bring up feelings of discomfort, but you may skip questions or answer to whatever degree you are comfortable with. Your participation will not jeopardize your position as a member of the women's ministry or church.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

All participants will be compensated for their time with a copy of the final thesis. Additionally, I will offer my time to help do any needed church work such as organizing offices, setting up and taking down event materials, helping with transportation to and from church, etc.

The results of my research will contribute to the knowledge within academia and in the wider Wisconsin and Hmong community about the perspectives of Hmong women and their connections to place and food. My study may also help others understand the significance of women's participation in church and in their larger community as agents in shaping and sustaining community.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

If you prefer not to be identified, any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of privacy and no access to information, including the interviews and transcriptions. The data will be stored in a private and personal laptop and storage device that will be locked in storage.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- **The research team:**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

Maliya Lor
Master's Student, UCLA
414-943-9417
malialor@g.ucla.edu

Valerie Matsumoto
Faculty Sponsor
Professor
Department of History and Department of Asian American Studies
UCLA
matsumot@history.ucla.edu

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

Please say that you have read the above and have had any questions answered before the interview begins. Doing this means that you give your informed consent to be a participant in this study. This copy is for your records.

(Hmong version)

University of California, Los Angeles

Kev Tso Cai rau Sib Tham

Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong Women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community

Maliya Lauj yog ib tug ntxhais tam tob kawm ntawv txog Hmoob keeb kwv. Tamsim no nws kawm ob daim master's tiv kis nyob rau lub tsev kawm ntawv Univeristy of California, Los Angeles nyob rau hauv nroog Los Angeles. Nws ob daim master's tiv kis no yog hais txog Asian American Studies thiab Community Health Sciences.

Koj tau mag saiv vim hais tias koj koj lus xub teb nyob ncaj rau qhov kev xav kawm txog cov niam tsev nyob rau hauv lub church no. Kuv yuav nug koj txog ib ob lo lus tej zaum koj yuav tsis tshuav xav teb tau. Dua li, yog tias kuv pom koj chim losis ua koj nyuaj siab, kuv yuav tsis nug koj ntxiv. Koj tsis teb los yeej tau txhua lub sij hawm.

Koj lub hom phiaj ua koj kawm tamsim no yog abtsi?

Lub hom phiaj yog kawm txog poj niam Hmoob ua yog cov niam tsev nyob hauv tsev teem ntuj lub tswvyim thiab lawm kev los ua ka koom nroog koom ze zog. Kuv nsteeg tias qhov no yuav pab kuv tob tau tias niam tsev ua nyob hauv lub nroog Wisconsin lub neeg nyob zoo li cas. Ua ntej tshaj plawb kuv xav nug cov niam tsev nyob hauv lub tsev teem ntuj nyob Wisconsin tias niam tsev kev muag kabzauv thiab cov dejnum nyob rau hauv pawg nsteeg yog ab tsi thiab pab lawm li cas. Kuv ntseeg tias cov lus ua cov laus ntawm peb Hmoob nyob Wisconsin yog ib cov uas tseem ceeb thiab yuav ua tau txoj kev kawm zoo heev. Cov lus no yuav koj los qhia thiab pub rau Hmoob cov neeg laus tau yuav.

Yog kuv kav tso cai rau qhov sib tham ntawd no, kuv yuav npaj thiab pib li cas?

Yog tias koj kav, thaum tus thawj los nroog koj tham nws yuav nug kom koj:

- Npaj li sij hawm ib teev thiab pe caug feeb rau qhov sib tham. Nws yuav pub rau koj xaiv tias sib tham saum koj tsev losis ib qhov chaw koj nyiam.
- Thaum lub sij hawm sib tham, koj lo lus nug yuav hais txog tes yam li:
 - Koj txoj kev pab rau cov niam tsev muag kabzauv
 - Hmoob txoj kev koom zeg koom zog nyob hauv lav Wisconsin
 - Koj txoj haujlwm thiab dejnum uas koj ua niaj hnuv
 - Coj lus nug xwm li:
 - Ntawm koj niam tsev thaum lawm ua kabzauv muag, lawm txoj kev sib raug zoo pab rau kev koom ze zog yog li cas?
 - Thaum ua cov tegnum muag kabzauv, cov niam tsev sib pab li cas kom thiaj li ua tag cov dejnum kom zoo?
- Cov lus sib tham yuav muab kaw tiamsis yog koj tsis xav ces yeeg tsis ua li cas.

- Yog hais tias koj tsis xav sib koj lub npe ces mam li muab lub npe npog kom thiaj li tsis paub tia tus hais lus yog leejtwg. Kuv mam li tij thaib wb cov lus no thiab qhia rau koj paub tias koj lub npe tsis nyob rau kuv paub ntawv sau, daim kab xeb losis daim ntawv.
- Yuav tsis pub paub txog cov lus sib tham no. Koj lub npe, koj tsev neeg lub npe losis pawg twg, yuav tsi muab tso rau sab nrauv paub. Kuv yuav nug koj txog ib ob lo lus tej zaum koj yuav tsis tshuav xav teb tau. Cov lus koj muab rau kuv hnuv no yuav tso raws li tus lej xwj. Tsis muaj lwm tus los nyeem taub thiab saib tau cov lus sib tham no.

Qhov sij hawm tham yuav ntev li cas?

Thaum pib mus rau thaum xaum yuav sim sij hawm tag nrho li ib teev thiab peb caug feeb. Yog tias muaj lus nug txiv, yuav sim sib hawm li ib teev. Peb yuav pib tau lub xya hli mus txog lub cuaj hli. Yog hais tias cov hli no tsis hauv rau koj, mam li xyuav saib thiaj lub hli twg zoo rau koj.

Yog kuv kav tso cai wb sib tham, yuav puas muab teb yam kuv yuavtsum npaj sia ua?

Kuv yuav nug koj txog ib ob lo lus tej zaum koj yuav tsis tshuav xav teb tau. Cov lus koj muab rau kuv hnuv no yuav tso raws li tus lej xwj. Tsis muaj lwm tus los nyeem taub thiab saib tau cov lus sib tham no. Koj cov lus yuav tsis ua li cas rau koj kev koom rau hauv lub tsev teem ntuj no.

Yog kuv kav tso cai sib tham ces puas yuav muab kev pab rau kuv?

Thaum sij hawm tiav, ib daim ntawv yuav muab pub dawb rau koj. Daim ntawv ntawd no yog cov lus tseem ceeb khaws cia los ntawd koj niam tsev nyob lub church no. Ntxiv mus, kuv yuav muab kuv lub sij hawm los pub dawb pab pawg nsteeg thiab niam tsev ua dejnum hauv tsev teem ntuj.

Kuv ntseeg tias cov lus ua cov laus ntawm peb Hmoob nyob Wisconsin yog ib cov uas tseem ceeb thiab yuav ua tau txoj kev kawm zoo heev. Cov lus no yuav koj los qhia thiab pub rau Hmoob cov neeg laus tau yuav.

Kuv lub npe thiab kuv cov ntaub ntawv puas yuav khaws cia?

Yuav tsis pub paub txog cov lus sib tham no. Koj lub npe, koj tsev neeg lub npe losis pawg twg, yua tsis muab tso rau sab nrauv paub. Kuv mam li tij thaib wb cov lus sib tham hnuv no thiab qhia rau koj paub tias koj lub npe tsis nyob rau kuv paub ntawv sau, daim kab xeb losis daim ntawv. Ua ntev kuv yuav xav sau cia koj koj lus losis muab rau lwm tug ua lawm xav sis, kuv yuav los nus koj ua ntej.

Txoj kev cai rau kuv yog ab tsi hauv peb qhov sib tham?

- Kuv yuav nug koj ib ob lo lus yog koj tsis xav teb lo tsis ua li cas.
- Yog muab teb yam lus koj tsis xav teb yeej tsis ua li cas. Qhov no yeej tsis los ua tau teeb meem los ntawd wb.

- Kuv mam li tij thaib wb coj lus sib tham hnuv no thiab qhia rau koj paub tias koj lub npe tsis nyob rau kuv paub ntawv sau, daim kab xeb losis daim ntawv.

Yog tias kuv muab lus nug, leejtwg yog tug yuav pab kuv?

- **Pawg ua yuav pab tau koj:**

Yog tiam koj muab lus nug losis lwj yam ua koj xav paub ntxiv, hu rau:

Maliya Lor
Master's Student, UCLA
414-943-9417
malialor@g.ucla.edu

Valerie Matsumoto
Faculty Sponsor
Professor
Department of History and Department of Asian American Studies
UCLA
matsumot@history.ucla.edu

- **Lub koom haum huv uas UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

Yog koj xav tham nrog cov sab nraub, huv rau lub xov roog: (310) 206-2040. Yog koj xav sau ntawd mus ces sau rau: participants@research.ucla.edu losis tsav ntawv xav rau: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

Ua ntej peb pib, thov hais tias koj nkag siab tsav ntawv ntawd no huvsu thiab to taub tiam yog ab tsi. Yog koj kav pib kaw lus thiab nrog koom rau qhov tegnum no, peb yuav pib mus. Tsab ntawv no yog rau koj khawvs cia. Koj puas muab lus nug ntxiv ua ntej peb yuav pib?

Appendix II. Screening Consent Forms

(English Script)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES SCREENING CONSENT SCRIPT

Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community

Thank you for calling Maliya Lor regarding the project, “Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community.” I would like to ask you a few questions in order to determine whether you may be eligible for the research. Before I begin the screening, I would like to tell you a little bit about the research. I am interested in looking at ways in which Hmong women are engaging in foodways within church to reimagine community within and outside church, as well as to examine the ways in which they are shaping and sustaining community. The main site of my research will be a church in Wisconsin. By interviewing Hmong women who are members of the church’s women’s ministry, I plan to explore the ways in which immigrant women have been organizing in church and reimagining community in Wisconsin.

Are you willing to continue with the screening? The screening will take about three minutes. I will ask you about your membership in the women’s ministry and participation in the church eggroll fundraiser. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or are uncomfortable answering, and you may stop at any time. Your participation in the screening is voluntary.

Your answers will be confidential. No one will know your answers except for the research team. If you qualify for the study, I will ask for your full consent to participate in my study and all information you provide will be kept confidential unless you fully consent otherwise. If you do not qualify for the study, all answers will not be kept and any personal information that may have been shared will be stripped of identifiable information.

Are you willing to continue with the screening? [*If no, thank the person and hang-up*]

Please answer yes or no after I finish reading each question:

- 1) Would you consider yourself a member of the women’s ministry at this church?
- 2) Have you participated in at least one eggroll fundraiser with the church?

Thank you for answering the screening questions.

[*if qualifies for study*] I have determined that you are eligible for the study. At this point, I will ask you for your consent to participate in my study. I want to remind you that all information you provide will be kept confidential.

[*if does not qualify for study*] I have determined that you are not eligible for the study. At this point, I will discard your answers and all personal information will be stripped of any identifiable information.

Do you have any questions about the screening or the research? I am going to give you a telephone number to call if you have any questions later. Do you have a pen? If you have questions about the research screening, you may call me at (414) 943-9417 and I will answer your questions.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than me, please call the UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122.

Thank you again for your willingness to answer my questions.

(Hmong Script)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
Kev Sib Tham Sau Tseg thiab Lus Nug

Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community

Ua tsaug rau koj lub sij hawm ua nrog kuv, Maliya Lauj, tham txog ib yam ua tseem ceeg rau poj niam Hmoob ua yog “Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community.” Ua ntej peb yuav pib, kuv xav rov qab xyuav dua ntxiv tias ua cas kuv thiaj li yuav kom nej sawv daws koom nrog kuv ua ke kawm txog poj niam Hmoob no. Kuv tab tom kawm thiab tob tau hais tias ua cas niam tsev nyob hauv lub tsev teem ntuj ua tau koom ze zog thiab los muag kabzauv los pab lub ze lub zog. Ua ntej tsha plawb kuv xav nug cov poj niam uas yog cov niam tsev nyob rau haus lub tsev teem ntuj nyob hauv lub nroog Wisconsin. Kuv ntseeg tias nej cov lus yog ib coj tseem ceeb thiab ua tau txoj kev kawm zoo heev coj los qhia thiab pub rau hmoob cov neeg laus tau yuav.

Lub sij hawm no, kuv muab li ib ob lo lus nug yog tias koj kav? Cov lus nug no yuav si sij hawm li peb feeb. Kuv yuav nug txog koj kev koom nrog lub church no thiab kev pab rau pawg niam tsev.

Yuav tsis pub paub txog cov lus sib tham no. Koj lub npe, koj tsev neeg lub npe losis pawg twg, yuav tsis muab tso rau sab nrauv paub. Kuv yuav nug koj txog ib ob lo lus tej zaum koj yuav tsi tshuav xav teb tau. Dua li, yog tias kuv pom koj tsis xav teb los yeej tau txhua lub sij hawm. Kuv mam li tij thaib wb coj lus sib tham hnuv no thiab qhia rau koj paub tias koj lub npe tsis nyob rau kuv paub ntawv sau, daim kab xeb losis daim ntawv. Cov lus koj muab rau kuv hnuv no yuav tso raws li tus lej xwj. Tsis muaj lwm tus los nyeem tau thiab saib tau cov lus sib tham no.

Koj pua muaj lus nug ua ntej wb yuav pib?

Yog tsis muab, koj puas kav peb pib? [if no, thank the person and hang-up]

Cov lus kuv yuav nug koj, koj cia li teb yog losis tsis yog:

- 1) Ntawm koj kev xav, koj puas yog ib tug niam tsev nyob rau pawg nsteeg no?
- 2) Koj puas tau koom nrog cov niam tsev muag kabzauv?

Ua tsaug rau koj lo lus teb.

[if qualifies] Kuv saib tau hais tias koj nyob ncaj rau kuv kev luj xyuav no. Lub caij no, kuv yuav nug tias koj pua tso cai rau peb sib tham mus.

[if does not qualify] Kuv saib tau hais tias koj tsis nyob ncaj rau kuv kev luj xyuav no. Lub caij no, kuv mam li muab coj lus teb no khaws cia thiab tsis muab leej twg yuav paub.

Nyob rau ntaub ntawv hauv daim kav xeb, kuv yuav nug koj ntxiv ua ntej wb pib. Koj puas tso cai rau peb sib tham? Yog tias tso cai, pib tau.

Yog tias koj muaj lus nug ntxiv rau qhov tegnum no hu ua “Wrapping Eggrolls with Hmong women: Friendship Networks and Fundraising in a Wisconsin Church Community,” ces hu rau lub xov rooj (414) 943-94317 kuv mam li nrog koj tham kom zoo ua ntej yuav pib.

Yog tias koj muab kev txhawj txog qhov tegnum no losis koj xav tham nrog lub koom haum, hu rau UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program lub xov tooj (310) 825-7122.

Ua tsaug rau koj lub sij hawm thiab koj cov lus es koj teb kuv nug koj.

Appendix III. Interview Questions

(English Script)

Eggroll Fundraiser Day

Purpose of fundraising

1. Think about the most recent fundraiser. What was the purpose?
 - a. Who was this important for? Is the usual reason to fundraise?
2. What kinds of things do the women fundraise for?
 - a. How often do the women have these fundraisers?
 - b. How did you get involved? How long have you been doing this?
3. Why do you think the women organize these fundraisers?
 - a. Why is this important to them? To the church members? (seems like a big task)
 - b. Is this a major source of financial support for the church?

Breakdown of the activities involved in fundraising

1. Describe what the schedule is like when the women do a fundraiser.
 - a. How is all the work organized? Is there a leader who decides this?
 - b. On what day and time do you start?
2. What do the women need to do to prepare for the fundraiser?
 - a. Is everything prepared in one place?
 - b. How are the ingredients prepared?
3. Where is all the cooking done?
 - a. Is this the same place every time? Is there a reason?
4. Could you tell me about what you did at the fundraiser? Do you usually have a particular task?
 - a. Have you always done this?
5. Could you tell me about what the other women did?
 - a. Why did they do this? Is there a reason?

Who is involved and what are the main roles

1. What are the most important activities?
 - a. How many people do the women ask to come help?
2. Were the men helping out too? Youth?
 - a. Were these the same people?
 - b. What did they do? What were they not allowed to do?
3. Could you tell me how the women get orders for the fundraiser?
 - a. Who helps them get orders?
 - b. When do start getting orders?
 - c. What is the usual cost for one dozen? Is this always the same price?

4. Who handles the money from the fundraiser?
 - a. How is the money collected?
5. Who usually buys the eggrolls?
 - a. How do you know your customers? How do they hear about it?
6. Who delivers the eggrolls?
 - a. How many deliveries do they make?
 - b. Where are they mostly making these deliveries?

Making eggrolls a Hmong fundraising food item to sell

Choosing the eggroll to sell

1. How would you describe the taste of the eggrolls?
 - a. How do they compare to other eggrolls you have eaten? Where have you eaten them?
 - b. Do you enjoy the taste? Why do you feel so?
2. How have you described your eggrolls to people you sell them to?
 - a. Do they understand what the ingredients are?
 - b. Have they asked you for future orders?
3. Would you consider eggrolls to be a Hmong food?
 - a. Do other people think the same?
 - b. How would you describe taste of Hmong food?
4. How did you learn to make eggrolls?
 - a. Who taught you?
 - b. When would you eat eggrolls?
5. Why do you think the women chose to make eggrolls for their fundraisers?
 - a. Do you know who started them? Perhaps another church?
 - b. Was there a recipe used?
6. Do you think the women enjoy doing this fundraiser?
 - a. How do you feel about it? Would you continue to be involved in the future?
7. Are there other churches doing eggroll fundraisers?
 - a. How did you hear about them? Another women's ministry?
 - b. How are their eggrolls similar or different?

Background on women's ministry

1. Did all the women come to help every time?
 - a. Did some come more than others? Why?
 - b. What if they had to work?
2. Is fundraising an important activity to the women's ministry?
 - a. How is the money spent?

3. What do the women usually like to do as a group?
 - a. What kinds of activities do women organize? any with other churches?
4. Why did you join this church?
5. What roles do women have in church?
 - a. Why are they important?

Community and Workplace

1. Where are you employed? And how long have you worked there?
 - a. What is your role?
2. How did you find this type of work?
3. At work, how would you describe your relations with co-workers or clients?
 - a. Who do you usually talk to? eat lunch with?
 - b. What kind of work do they do?
4. Have you taken eggroll orders from your co-workers or clients?
 - a. What is their response to you?
 - b. How do you feel about asking them?
 - c. Do they order from you regularly?
5. Could you describe how you asked co-workers or clients for support?
 - a. If you can remember, what was it like to ask for the first time?
6. Have you asked your co-workers or clients for church support in other ways?
 - a. Is their response same or different?
7. What other groups do you participate in outside of church?
 - a. Are there other friends that you meet with regularly?
8. Who do you feel closest to?
 - a. How did you meet them? How long have you known them?

(Hmong Script)

Eggroll Fundraiser Day

Purpose of fundraising

1. Zaum kawg ua cov niam tsev mus muag kabzauv, yog vim li cas?
 - a. Puas muab ib qhov hom phiaj?
2. Cov niam tsev ua qhov fundraiser, yog mus pab rau abtsi?
 - a. Thiaj ua pes tsawg zaum?
 - b. Vim li cas koj thiaj li mus pab? Thiab koj ua hom ntej los lawm?
3. Koj puas xav hais tias qhov dejnum no yog ib qhov tseem ceeb rau cov niam tsev?
 - a. Qhov fundraiser no puas tseem ceeb rau lub church?
 - b. Yog hais tais tsis muag kabzauv, lub church puas muab lwm yam kev pab?

Breakdown of the activities involved in fundraising

1. Txog hnuv uas ua cov kabzauv, pib li cas? Qhia hais tias qhov dejnum rau hnuv Thursday thiaj hnuv Friday.
 - a. Txhuayam haujlwm rau hnuv ntawd npaj li cas? Puas muab ib tug neej los ua tus thawjcoj?
 - b. Thiaj nej pib li cas rau hnuv twg thiaj teem caij tau twg?
2. Ua ntej yuav pib, cov niam tsev npaj rau lub fundraiser li cas?
 - a. Nej puas sawvdaws npaj rau ib qhov chaws?
 - b. Nej npaj cov koom ua kabzauv li cas?
3. Thaum txog caij ua kabzauv, nej mus ua rau lub chaws qhov twg?
 - a. Puas yog ua rau qhov chaws no txhua zaug?
4. Koj txoj dejnum hauv qhov fundraiser no yog abtsi?
 - a. Koj puas yog ua qhov no txhua zaug?
5. Lwm tus niam tsev, lawm txoj haujlwm yog abtsi?
 - a. Yog vim li cas lawm thiaj li ua?

Who is involved and what are the main roles?

1. Puas muab ib cov dejnum uas tseem ceeb tshaj lwm yam?
 - a. Pes tsawg tus niam tsev koom pab rau hnuv ntawd?
2. Cov txiv tsev thiab tub ntxhais hluas puas tuaj pab?
 - a. Lawm puas ib txwm tuaj pab?
 - b. Lawm cov haujlwm yog abtsi? Puas muab tej yam uas tsis pub lawm ua?
3. Cov niam tsev mus muag kabzauv, mus muag li cas?
 - a. Puas muab lwm twg pab muag thiab?
 - b. Pib muag thaum twg?

- c. Qhov nqi kabzauv yog pestawg? Puas ib txwm yog qhov nqi no?
- 4. Leejtwg khaws koj nyiaj?
 - a. Thaum twg muab nyiaj rau tus neeg no?
 - b. Cov xav yuav, lawm them thaum twg?
- 5. Thaum nej mus muag, cov ua ib txwm pheej yuav yog leejtwg?
 - a. Koj puas paub lawm thiab? Lawm paub txog lub fundraiser li cas?
- 6. Leejtwg mus deliver cov kabzauv?
 - a. Pes tsawg deliveries?
 - b. Mus deliver lub sijhawm twg?

Making eggrolls a Hmong fundraising food item to sell?

Choosing the eggroll to sell

1. Qhov taste ntawd cov kabzauv, koj puas kam qhia kuv hais tias yog ab tsi?
 - a. Yog vim li cas xaiv tus kabzauv los muag?
 - b. Puas yog vim kabzauv qab? Koj puas xav hais tias qab?
2. Thaum nej mus muag, puas maub leejtwg hais tias kabzauv no qab li cas?
 - a. Lawm puas paub hais tias yog ab tsi?
 - b. Lawm puas yuav ntxim thiaj vim lawm nyiaj qhov taste?
3. Cov kabzauv puas yog Hmoob li?
 - a. Lwm tus puas xav li no thiab?
 - b. Hmoob qhov mov yog ab tsi? Thiab qab li cas?
4. Thawj zaug koj mus muag kabzauv, koj mus kawm li cas?
 - a. Puas yog muab leej twg qhia koj ua?
 - b. Puas noj kabzauv txhua zaug? Losis noj thaum twg?
5. Yog vim li cas cov niam tsev thiaj li muag kabzauv?
 - a. Leeg twg yog tus xub pib ua? Puas yog lwm Hmoob church?
 - b. Puas muab ib qhov recipe?
6. Koj puas xav hais tias cov niam tsev nyiam ua qhov dejnum no?
 - a. Ntawd koj tus kheej, koj puas nyiam ua? Mus tom ntej, koj puas xav ua ntxim thiaj?
7. Puas muab lwm Hmoob church ua qhov no thiaj?
 - a. Vim li cas koj thiaj li puas txog?
 - b. Koj puas tau mus yuav lawm cov kabzauv? Qab ib yam lossis tsis qam ib yam?

Background on women's ministry

1. Puas yog txhau zaug tagnrho cov niam tsev yeej tuaj pab ua?
 - a. Puas muab ib cov ua tsis khoom tuaj thiab?
 - b. Yog hais tias ua haujlwm hnuv ntawd ces tsis khoom ces lawm ua li cas?

2. Lub fundraiser no puas yog ib qhov haujlwm ua tseem ceeb rau cov niam tsev?
 - a. Cov niam tsev sim koj nyiaj mus pab ab tsi?
3. Cov niam tsev, lawm puas ua lwm yam uake thiaj thaum tsis muag kabzauv?
 - a. Qhov haujlwm no puas pab cov niam tsev thiab? Pab cov muab sijhawm los tham thiab los nyob uake?
 - a. Cov niam tsev puas ua haujlwm nrog lwm niam tsev thiab?
4. Yog vim li cas, koj thiaj li los khoom lub church no?
5. Niam tsev txoj haujlwm hauv church yog ab tsi thiab? Puas muab ntxim?
 - a. Cov haujlwm no puas tseem ceeb thiab?

Community and Workplace

1. Koj ua haujlwm ab tsi? Thiab ua hom ntev lawm?
 - a. Koj txoj dejnum yog ua ab tsi?
2. Koj nrhiav tau txoj haujlwm no li cas?
3. Pem koj haujlwm, koj cov co-worker lawm yog neej ab tsi?
 - a. Koj puas tham thiab nom mov nrog lawm thiab?
 - b. Lawm txoj haujlwm yog ab tsi thiab?
4. Koj puas tau noog koj cov co-worker pab yuav kabzauv thiab?
 - a. Lawm puas xav ab tsi rau koj?
 - b. Lawm puas yog cov ua pheed yuav kabzauv ntawd koj thiab?
5. Thaum koj mus noog koj tus co-worker, koj hais li cas?
 - a. Yog koj ncog tau, thawj zaug koj mus hais lawm, lub caij ntawd, koj xav li cas?
6. Koj puas tau hais kom koj cov co-worker pab yuav khoom rau lwm yam rau koj thiab?
7. Koj puas muab lwm phoojywg nyob sab nraum church ua koj nyiam sib tham nrog?
8. Puas muab ib tug neeg losis ib cov neeg ua koj xav hais tias yog koj tus phoojywg zoo?
 - a. Koj ntsib lawm li cas? Thiab paub lawm hom ntej los lawm?

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