

ABSTRACT

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS AND/OR IMPEDE HMONG WOMEN FROM OBTAINING A HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREE

Although many ethnic groups are growing in size in America, one of the fastest increasing groups is Asian Americans. A particular Southeast Asian group that has immigrated to the United States within the last 30 years is the Hmong. Since the arrival of the Hmong in the United States, race and traditional gender roles have been barriers for the educational advancement of Hmong women. Presently, there is a lack of research pertaining to issues that Hmong women face in their pursuit of an education. Specifically, there are limited studies that examine the cultural obstacles together with the structural constraints of mainstream American society that may contribute towards and/or impede Hmong women from continuing their education at a postsecondary institution and successfully obtaining a higher education degree. The purpose of this study was to discover what factors affect Hmong women from successfully obtaining a higher education degree through participant interviews and document analysis. A qualitative study was conducted with a focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the various experiences and perspectives of Hmong women who have obtained a higher education degree. The data from this study were gathered through interviews and document analysis, and the findings indicated that the overarching factors that appeared to strongly impact the lives of all the participants were stereotyping, the pressures associated with marriage, and the act of balancing the two worlds they exist in.