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**PROMOTING REFUGEE WELL-BEING:
A COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY AND LEARNING INTERVENTION**

By

Jessica Rose Goodkind

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

PROMOTING REFUGEE WELL-BEING: A COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY AND LEARNING INTERVENTION

By

Jessica Rose Goodkind

The United States accepts approximately 70,000 refugees each year for resettlement. Most of these refugees face numerous struggles in their new lives, including overcoming past traumas and adjusting to a different environment that is not particularly receptive to newcomers. The adjustment of Hmong refugees has been particularly challenging. The Refugee Well-Being Project was developed to promote the well-being and empowerment of Hmong refugees. It was rooted in ecological and empowerment perspectives, focusing on improving the community's responsiveness to the needs of refugees and building upon refugees' strengths, experiences, and interests. For a period of six months, Hmong adults and undergraduate students participated together in the intervention, which had two major elements: an educational component, which involved cultural exchange, opportunities to address community issues collectively, and one-on-one learning opportunities for Hmong adults, and an advocacy component which involved undergraduates advocating for and transferring advocacy skills to Hmong families to increase their access to resources in their communities. An evaluation with both quantitative and qualitative components revealed that Hmong and undergraduate participants benefited in numerous ways. Hmong participants' quality of life, satisfaction with resources, English proficiency, and knowledge for the United States citizenship test increased and their levels of distress decreased over the course of the

intervention. In addition, Hmong participants increased their environmental mastery, self-sufficiency, and self-confidence. Both Hmong and undergraduates developed greater critical consciousness and awareness about structural factors affecting their lives, the difficulties faced by refugees, diversity within the United States, and possibilities for collective action. These findings suggest that attending to the exile-related stressors faced by refugees, providing opportunities for mutual learning and collective validation, and collaboratively developing interventions that are community-based and culturally-appropriate are important aspects of promoting refugees' well-being and creating supportive contexts for newcomers to the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

“Without the contributions, loyalty and extraordinary energy of the incessant waves of immigrants from all over the world, American democracy would have long ceased to exist. Immigrants and refugees come to America searching for economic opportunities and political and religious freedom, ‘The American Dream.’ No one else knows better than the immigrants and refugees the meaning of freedom and democracy, and no one is willing to pay a higher price in order to achieve the American dream. Therefore they endure hardships and drastic social and cultural changes unbearable for others, and they buy into American ideals of social, economic and political participation, and of educational opportunity accessible to all” (Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990).

Current estimates put the number of refugees in the world somewhere between 35 and 50 million people. The United States accepts a small number of refugees for resettlement, approximately 70,000 per year. Although many refugees feel fortunate to resettle in the United States, they face numerous challenges. As they struggle to adjust to a new country with a very different language and cultures and to create new homes and lives for themselves, the economic¹ and political² contexts in the United States in the last decade have compounded their difficulties. “The American Dream” they expect to pursue is rapidly vanishing. To counteract these recent trends, it is important to consider structures and relationships that can be developed to promote the well-being of refugees and to ensure that communities in the United States benefit from the important contributions refugees can make.

¹ The U.S. government has increasingly shrunk its responsibility for providing social services, benefits, economic regulation, and a safety net to its citizens and residents. At the same time, the number of jobs that provide livable wages and benefits has decreased (Sparr, 1994).

² In 1996, three federal laws (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act) were enacted. Among their many provisions, these laws excluded non-citizens (including legal permanent residents) from most public benefits, mandated the deportation of non-citizens for relatively minor offenses, expanded the number of deportable offenses, and removed opportunities for the appeal of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) decisions to legal courts (Nash et al., 2000).

This dissertation describes my efforts to create and assess an intervention, called the Refugee Well-Being Project, which addresses these issues for one particular group of refugees – the Hmong. From 1975 to 1996, approximately 130,000 Hmong people, an ethnic minority from Laos,³ resettled in the United States. They were among the many groups of Southeast Asian refugees to resettle in the United States after American involvement in the Vietnam conflict and the “secret war” in Laos.

Research on refugee well-being has typically focused on the high levels of distress and clinical diagnoses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety among refugees due to past traumas, and on individually-focused treatments. However, recent research has demonstrated that the high levels of distress among refugees are also caused by the daily stressors they face in their new lives, including their marginal position, extensive changes to their way of life, difficulty achieving their goals in a new place, poverty, loss of community and social support, loss of meaningful social roles, and racism and discrimination. Trauma-focused individual interventions often ignore the distress caused by exile-related stressors, may be culturally inappropriate, inaccessible, and often pathologize refugees who have many strengths and resources. Given these limitations, the purpose of the Refugee Well-Being Project was to create a program which brought together Hmong refugees and undergraduate students, and which promoted their well-being by creating opportunities for them to learn from each other, build upon their strengths, develop knowledge and skills for critical thinking and action, and identify their needs and goals and then work towards these goals through learning opportunities and the mobilization of community resources.

³ The Hmong are not originally from Laos. Their origins are a subject of great debate, but an estimated seven million Hmong people live in China, and there are hundreds of thousands of Hmong in Thailand,

The Refugee Well-Being Project was based upon ecological and empowerment perspectives, which emphasize the importance of attending to the culture and histories of individuals, their particular context, and the fit between the two; of focusing on structural forces and the mobilization of resources; and of involving individuals and groups in solving their own problems. These perspectives also have an explicit commitment to social justice, focus on strengths and resources rather than deficits, and emphasize the creation of collaborative, culturally-appropriate interventions that are directed by individuals and communities and what they want.

For a period of six months, Hmong adults and undergraduate students participated together in the intervention, which had two major elements: an educational component, which involved cultural exchange, opportunities to address community issues collectively, and one-on-one learning opportunities for Hmong adults; and an advocacy component which involved undergraduates advocating for and transferring advocacy skills to Hmong families to increase their access to resources in their communities. The learning component of the intervention involved two types of learning: instrumental learning through which individuals learn new skills and knowledge that can empower them by enabling them to pursue their chosen goals, access resources and participate in their communities; and emancipatory learning which contributes to empowerment by increasing individuals' critical consciousness and their understanding of the structural forces affecting them and by providing mechanisms through which to work collectively for social change. The advocacy component was based upon the idea that access to community resources is fundamental to promoting the well-being of disenfranchised individuals and groups. In particular, refugees face numerous barriers to accessing

Vietnam, and Burma. A smaller number remain in Laos (Faderman, 1998).

resources from their communities. Advocacy is important because it can contribute to empowerment through increases in resources and the transferring of advocacy skills.

In these ways, this study sought to promote Hmong refugees' well-being and empowerment, and to contribute to an understanding of refugees' resettlement challenges and experiences. In particular, it investigated the utility of ecological and empowerment approaches which emphasize refugees' strengths and attention to their current contextual conditions in alleviating their distress and improving their well-being. The evaluation of the intervention included both quantitative and qualitative components, which sought to investigate the impact of the intervention on Hmong refugees' English proficiency, knowledge of U.S. history and government for the citizenship test, access to resources, community participation, quality of life, and psychological well-being. In addition, the multi-method strategy employed in this study allowed for an exploration of emergent and individualized outcomes for Hmong participants, the impacts of the intervention on undergraduate participants, and the implementation and process of the intervention.

Refugees in the United States

The number of refugees in the world has increased rapidly in the last 10 years, as ethnic conflict, famine, war, and other political struggles have forced millions of people to leave their homes. There were an estimated 35 million refugees and internally displaced people at the start of 2001 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2002). Other estimates put this number as high as 50 million people, which is almost one percent of the world's population (Ager, 1999). Recent events throughout the world suggest that these numbers will continue to grow.

A significant majority of refugees remain in their country of first asylum (usually in the “developing” world) or are repatriated to the country from which they fled. Less than one percent of refugees are resettled into a third country in the “developed” world; the United States accepts the majority of refugees from this group, approximately 71,000 in the year 2000. The next largest acceptor of refugees is Canada, which accepted about 13,000 refugees that year (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2002). Thus, the United States fulfills an important role in resettling refugees who are unable to return home or remain in their country of asylum.⁴ Although refugees who resettle in the “developed” world are in the minority, they have received much more attention in the literature and research on refugees than have those who repatriate or remain in their country of first asylum (Ager, 1999). Refugees who resettle in a third country usually face the largest adjustment – both in terms of cultural and language differences and disparities in employment opportunities and ways of life. They are more likely to have skills and knowledge that are not easily transferable to their new country. Thus, a great deal of research has focused on understanding the immense transitions these refugees experience and the factors that contribute to the promotion of their well-being. As a country that accepts large numbers of refugees each year, the United States has a responsibility to ensure that refugees have the opportunities and resources to build new lives and homes. Extensive research on the adjustment of refugees and immigrants in the United States has shown that the first and second generations are crucial – experiences

⁴ It should be noted that since September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center and Pentagon were attacked, the United States has accepted almost no refugees for resettlement. Eight months into the fiscal year, less than 14,000 refugees (out of the yearly quota set at 70,000) had arrived in the United States, leaving thousands of refugees who had been approved for resettlement before September 11 in dangerous situations (Springer, 2002). This is due in part to the U.S. government’s decision to halt the refugee resettlement program, in part to President Bush’s failure to sign the presidential determination that outlined

during this time tend to determine whether refugees and immigrant families will be able to move out of poverty (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Thus, the focus of this study is on a group of refugees who have recently resettled in the United States and the promotion of their well-being.

Refugee Well-Being

The extensive research on refugee well-being and mental health suggests that refugees share certain similar experiences – overcoming past traumas such as violence, loss of loved ones, economic hardships, dangerous flight from their homes, and difficulties of life in refugee camps, as well as facing the challenges of adjusting to life in a new place. However, refugees experiences also differ widely, based not only upon the particular refugee group and their culture and refugee experience, but also on the different social locations of individuals within different refugee groups, such as those related to gender, age, race, marital status. Furthermore, refugees' experiences are impacted by political and social factors that dictate how their resettlement and assistance were structured and their reception in their new environment. Thus, it is important to examine the complex relationships between individual characteristics and experience, social location, community, societal, political, and global factors when considering the promotion of refugee well-being.

There are multiple levels of analysis from which to approach the issue of refugee well-being. First, it is important to consider the dynamics and phenomena that are displacing so many people and creating the huge number of refugees in the world. Second, when considering refugees who resettle in the United States, questions about

new security screening procedures for refugees for several months, and in part to delays in implementing the new procedures.

how systems in the United States, such as government assistance, healthcare, and economic opportunities, are structured to affect refugee well-being and distress should be addressed. Finally, there are concerns with how individual and community characteristics and refugees' experiences of distress and well-being interact with these broader social and political forces. Clearly, these levels are interrelated – and it is important to think about both individual and system-level change. The focus of this research is primarily on individual and community well-being and addressing this through attention to refugees' experiences after resettlement in the United States. Implications for systems-level change will also be discussed.

Life in the United States is often difficult for refugees who resettle here. By the time they arrive, they have most often suffered numerous hardships, including: war, violence, religious and political persecution, famine, death of loved ones, loss of home, destruction of community, torture, and the difficulties of flight and life in refugee camps (Ahearn & Athey, 1991). However, their struggles are not over; they must then adjust to life in a new place, which usually has a different language, culture, technology, and social and economic systems. In addition, the native people in the refugees' country of resettlement usually do not understand them and often resent their arrival (Hein, 1995). Adjustment is often more challenging for refugees than for other immigrants because their relocation and contact with a new culture is involuntary (Rumbaut, 1991b).⁵ During

⁵ Social scientists and the U.S. government usually discuss refugees and immigrants as distinct social groups. Immigrants are considered to be people who cross borders for economic reasons, while refugees are people who leave their country because of a "well founded fear of persecution" based on religious, ethnic, political or family reasons. However, consideration of particular situations (e.g., Haitians fleeing secret police in inner tubes and rafts who were turned away from Florida because they were not considered refugees) and U.S. policy since the Cold War, demonstrate that the determination of status is in large part ideological and, furthermore, that "the difference between immigrants and refugees is a matter of continuum rather than simple categorization" (Gold, 1992, p. ix). Most immigrants leave their country because of multiple factors, which may include personal, economic, political, and religious reasons.

their migration, refugees usually experience more undesirable change and danger and less control over their lives. In addition, once resettled, they are “challenged to resolve dual crises: a ‘crisis of loss’ – coming to terms with the past – and a ‘crisis of load’ – coming to terms with the present and immediate future” (Rumbaut, 1991b, p.57).

Most refugees in the United States will never be able to return to their homelands, and, therefore, it is important to promote their psychological, physical, and economic well-being here. However, as discussed above, refugees face many challenges in the processes of adjusting to their new lives, in particular, adapting to a new and very different culture and way of life.

The Process of Acculturation

Although acculturation is not the main focus of this study, it is important to consider when thinking about the well-being of refugees because it is an inevitable process of change that happens when two groups with different cultures come into contact with each other (Berry, 1998). Cultural change can and does occur in both groups, but there is usually one group that tends to change more. In the case of refugees, it is their culture rather than the culture of their new host society that tends to be most affected.

Although many groups have to go through a process of adaptation when they come into contact with a different cultural group, the difficulty of this process and its outcomes vary, depending on both group-level and individual-level factors. Many of the individual-level factors that affect the acculturation process are immutable, such as age, gender, previous education, pre-acculturation status, migration motivation (refugee versus immigrant), cultural distance, and personality. However, individuals and groups

have the choice, to some extent, to decide how much they want to maintain their cultural identity and characteristics and also how much contact and participation they want with the new culture. Based on these two axes of decisions, there are four possible acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, segregation/separation, and marginalization. It is important to note, however, that the choice of strategies is not completely within the control of the acculturating individual or group; it also depends on the inclusiveness of the dominant society (Berry, 1998). For instance, if the host society is not open to the participation of newcomers or accepting of cultural diversity, the only strategies available to a refugee are separation/segregation (maintenance of own culture and limited interaction with members of the dominant group) or marginalization (limited maintenance of original culture and limited involvement in new society). Thus, it is also important to consider societal support and attitudes, and other group factors in the acculturation process, particularly because this process has the potential to negatively affect the health and well-being of refugees (Stein, 1986). Therefore, given that refugees' psychological, physical, and economic well-being is affected by their adaptation and the acculturation process, it is essential to attend to refugees' cultural backgrounds and the cultural changes they experience within the context of the receptiveness and supports available in resettlement communities (Berry, 1998). It is also important to note, however, that there is no "optimal" acculturation strategy; rather the impact particular acculturation strategies have on well-being depends on numerous individual, social, and political factors (Berry & Kim, 1988).

The importance of recognizing the process of cultural change and adaptation that refugees face is clear. The emphasis of the proposed study is on indicators of well-being

that are affected by the acculturation process but indicate adjustment in the general sense of the word (e.g. psychological well-being, quality of life, access to resources). As might be expected given the past traumas and adjustment struggles refugees must overcome, extensive research has found that they have lower levels of both psychological and socioeconomic well-being than other immigrants and than the general population (e.g., Rumbaut, 1991a; Westermeyer, Neider, & Callies, 1989).

Refugees' Psychological Well-Being

Many studies have found that refugees experience higher rates of psychological distress than the general population or than other immigrants in the United States and Canada (e.g., Berry, 1986; Williams and Westermeyer, 1986). This is particularly true for Southeast Asian refugees (Hirayama, Hirayama & Cetingok, 1993; Rumbaut, 1991a). The adverse mental health consequences related to becoming a refugee (i.e., the trauma of war, violence, escape, and resettlement), particularly for the Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees, have been extensively documented (e.g., Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Rumbaut, 1991a, 1991b, 1989b; Westermeyer, Neider, & Callies, 1989). Many of these studies have focused particularly on psychiatric symptoms such as depression, somatization, phobia, anxiety, hostility, and paranoia (e.g., Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Westermeyer et al., 1989). Westermeyer and colleagues found that there was a large subgroup of Hmong adults who continued to experience many of these symptoms even after eight years in the United States. Mollica et al. (1987) found that 92% of the Hmong refugees in their study met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

However, there has been some research that has measured psychological well-being of refugees more broadly. The Indochinese Health and Adaptation Research Project (IHARP), a longitudinal study of almost 500 Southeast Asian refugee households, employed the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Rumbaut, 1991a, 1991b, 1989a), which is an adapted version of the General Well-Being Index (Dupuy, 1974) that assesses frequency of affective symptoms of well-being and distress. According to Rumbaut (1985), the Psychological Well-Being Scale measures emotional and somatic distress and overall demoralization, rather than depression or other clinical disorders. The measure also includes a happiness subscale. Taken together, these scales are “reliable measures of general and persistent affective states as reported by the person” (Rumbaut, 1989a, p.155). In a broad study of refugee adjustment, Hmong refugees’ rates of distress/demoralization were three times higher than those of other Americans (Rumbaut, 1989a). Furthermore, their average levels of distress/demoralization were significantly higher and their average happiness levels significantly lower than Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Chinese-Vietnamese refugees (Ying & Akutsu, 1997).

Rumbaut (1991a) has also widely assessed refugees’ psychological well-being in terms of life satisfaction, which he describes as a cognitive rather than affective appraisal of well-being. Compared to other Southeast Asian refugee groups (Khmer, Chinese-Vietnamese, and Vietnamese), the Hmong were the least satisfied with their lives and were the only group whose life satisfaction decreased over time (Rumbaut, 1989a). Rumbaut (1991a) emphasizes that distress and life satisfaction are not opposite dimensions of a single scale, but rather measure very different psychological processes. Thus, it seems important to consider definitions of psychological well-being that include

both affective and cognitive components, and which use measures that have been developed to assess a wider range of people's experiences rather than only clinical populations. Furthermore, including life satisfaction and happiness measures provides opportunities to present research findings that are not solely deficit-focused.

With some notable exceptions such as the IHARP, however, most research on refugee mental health has not only focused on the high levels of distress and clinical diagnoses such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety among refugees, it has also typically emphasized refugees' past traumas as the cause of these problems (e.g., Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Westermeyer, Neider, & Callies, 1989). As a result, treatments for refugees have usually emphasized psychotherapy and other individual-focused solutions that address the past traumas.

However, recent research has demonstrated that the high levels of distress among refugees are also caused by the daily stressors they face in exile situations, including: their marginal position/relative powerlessness in new place (Miller, 1999; Rumbaut, 1991b), extensive, undesired changes to their way of life (e.g., Rumbaut, 1991b), difficulty achieving their life goals and environmental mastery in a new place (e.g., Worthington, 1999), poverty and daily economic concerns about survival in a new country (e.g., McLoyd, 1990; Paltiel, 1987; Silove et al., 1997), loss of community and social support (e.g., Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998; Sinnerbrink et al., 1997), loss of meaningful social roles (e.g., Lavik et al, 1996), and racism and discrimination (e.g., Silove et al., 1997). Furthermore, although past traumas certainly impact refugees' psychological well-being, "...there is concern that an overemphasis on discrete

experiences of trauma can encourage an acutely individualized and decontextualized view of the refugee experience” (Ager, 1999, p.5).

Not only do trauma-focused individual interventions ignore the distress caused by exile-related stressors, they also fail to address several other important issues. First, distressed refugees often do not use mental health clinics – both because they are not necessarily responsive to the needs of refugees and ethnic minorities and because of the common stigma of seeking “psychological” help (Miller, 1999; Sue & Morishima, 1982). In addition, we know that therapy and/or drugs alone are not effective without addressing the social and economic needs of refugees as well (e.g., Pejovic, Jovanovic, & Djurdic, 1997; Kinzie & Fleck, 1987). Furthermore, individual interventions can be culturally inappropriate, particularly for collectively-oriented cultures, and may even contribute to refugees’ disempowerment (e.g., Strawn, 1994). The idea of therapy and talking about one’s problems to a stranger is counter to many non-Western cultures. Pipher (2002) points out that not all cultures value the idea of talking about trauma as a method of healing: “Psychologists have a metaphor for healing – a wound must be washed, cleaned to heal. It may be painful but it is necessary. The Vietnamese also employ the wound metaphor for healing. But they say, ‘A wound will only heal if it is left alone’” (p.282). Finally, and most fundamentally, it is important to keep in mind that individual interventions often pathologize individuals (Ryan, 1976) and fail to utilize resources and strengths in their communities (Rappaport, 1981). For refugees in particular, individual trauma-focused interventions may lose sight of the fact that refugees are people with strengths and resources who are caught in horrible situations, and, furthermore, that their communities can also be important sources of strength.

Therefore, it is important to consider refugee mental health and its promotion from a broad perspective that recognizes the traumatic circumstances most refugees have had to endure prior to their resettlement in the United States, while also focusing on the difficulties refugees face in their daily lives in the United States. In addition, efforts to promote refugee well-being must be culturally relevant to refugees and should build upon their strengths and the resources in their communities. A fusion of ecological and empowerment perspectives on refugee well-being provides a useful framework through which to conceptualize these processes.

Ecological/Empowerment Perspective on Refugee Well-Being

There are many important principles of ecological and empowerment perspectives, and, in fact, many are shared by both perspectives. The components of each perspective that are most relevant to refugee well-being are highlighted here.

Traditionally, the individual has been the basic unit of analysis in psychology. In terms of refugee well-being, researchers have found several individual factors that are related to the mental health of Hmong refugees, including age, English proficiency, years in transit, and previous education (Rumbaut, 1989a; Westermeyer, Neider, & Callies, 1989; Ying & Akutsu, 1997). However, an ecological perspective emphasizes the importance of looking at multiple levels of analysis (i.e., individual, interpersonal, societal, cultural) and the interactions among them. Thus, an ecological perspective on refugee adjustment suggests a focus on several important factors. First, it emphasizes the complex interdependence between individuals and their environments (Kelly, 1966). An ecological approach must balance a focus on settings/context, individuals, and the dynamic relationships between them (Luke, Rappaport, & Seidman, 1991). Thus,

addressing the issue of refugee well-being must include consideration of the social and personal histories of specific refugees, the characteristics of the particular society of resettlement, and person-environment fit between the skills, needs, and culture of refugees and their resettlement community.

Second, an ecological approach recognizes that environment is not limited to a single, immediate setting, but includes multiple, nested levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, an ecological perspective would attend to multiple levels of context (e.g., individual, household, group, community) and would recognize structural forces (e.g., power, resources) that affect the adjustment processes of refugees. This perspective on promoting the well-being of refugees is supported by Rumbaut (1991b), who asserts that refugees are at particular risk for psychological distress because of their marginal position and relative powerlessness. It is difficult for them to deal with the extensive changes (usually undesired) they have endured and to try to achieve their life goals in a new, foreign environment.

Third, the ecological paradigm recognizes the cycling of resources in systems and communities, that all individuals have the right to community resources and that research can and should create and maintain resources in the community (Levine & Perkins, 1987). Thus, an ecological intervention should include a focus on mobilization of community resources for disenfranchised populations that lack adequate access. As opposed to individually-oriented psychology, which limits options for interventions to addressing the deficits of individuals, an ecological perspective directs attention beyond the individual to available resources in the community (Levine & Perkins, 1987). Rappaport (1981) suggests that often problems that appear to be indicative of poor

functioning are in reality a result of social structure and lack of resources. Many discussions of human problems obscure the importance of inequalities and lack of opportunities, and instead tend to blame the victim (Ryan, 1976; Caplan & Nelson, 1973). Ryan (1976) refers to this perspective as “exceptionalist,” a tendency to attribute problems to individual deficits rather than to systemic limitations or inequalities. This exceptionalist perspective leads to interventions for refugees that focus on changing them and addressing their deficits. However, an ecological paradigm suggests that an intervention to promote refugee well-being should focus on refugees’ strengths rather than their weaknesses and on the mobilization and redistribution of community resources to address their adjustment.

Fourth, an ecological paradigm illustrates that it is important to consider adaptation in understanding human behavior and that environments constrain and facilitate different behaviors (Kelly, 1966). This principle is particularly relevant to refugees, who are forced to adapt to a new, very different environment. The principle of adaptation further emphasizes that adaptation can occur not only by changes in individuals and their development of adaptive skills, but also through changes in the environment (Levine & Perkins, 1987). Thus, an intervention should not focus solely on refugees adjusting to their existing environment, but also on changing the environment by changing the distribution of community resources and creating settings which allow refugees to contribute their culture and knowledge to their community and enable them to develop additional skills and knowledge they need to negotiate their new environment. Finally, an ecological perspective emphasizes the importance of creating collaborative, culturally-appropriate interventions (Trickett, 1996), which are not dictated by outside

“experts,” but rather involve individuals and groups in defining and solving their own problems (Rappaport, 1977)

An empowerment perspective is based on an explicit commitment to social justice (Lee, 1994, 2001), focuses on strengths and resources rather than deficits (Saleebey, 1997), and insists that action be directed by individuals, families, groups and communities and what they want and need (Parsons, 1998). According to Parsons, Gutierrez & Cox (1998) empowerment involves real increases in power through: changes in attitudes, values, and beliefs such as self-efficacy and critical consciousness; validation through collective experience; development of knowledge and skills for critical thinking and action; and action. As Rappaport (1994) explains, “In the empowerment worldview, the concern becomes how to collaborate with people to create, encourage, or assist them to become aware of, obtain, or create the resources they may need to make use of their competencies. However, empowerment is not limited to individual competencies. It also involves contextual or setting variables as well as social and political processes” (p. 366). Empowerment is particularly significant for refugees because they have endured numerous situations in which they were powerless (e.g., being forced to leave their homes, living in refugee camps where they had almost no rights and very limited choice about where they would go next). Thus, opportunities to regain their self-efficacy, to have their experiences collectively validated, to develop new knowledge and skills, and to take positive actions that they choose in order to improve their lives and communities are especially important.

In conclusion, ecological and empowerment perspectives suggest a focus on addressing social issues from a multilevel approach, which locates problems and

solutions beyond the individual, and which acknowledges the explicit value and goal of social justice. Furthermore, these perspectives suggest that interventions must be designed with particular attention to specific individuals and communities within their larger political and social contexts, and with the involvement of participants in building upon their strengths and resources to solve their own problems. The focus of this research is on Hmong refugees and an intervention designed to facilitate their well-being.

The Hmong

The Hmong are an ethnic minority from the mountains of Laos, whose resettlement in the United States in the last twenty years follows a long history of persecution and suffering as an ethnic minority in several countries. Originally from China, many fled Chinese efforts of forced assimilation and migrated to the mountains of Laos and Vietnam about 150 years ago. As a result of their recruitment by the CIA to fight against the North Vietnamese and their communist allies in Laos during the Vietnam Conflict, many Hmong were forced to flee from Laos to Thailand between 1975 and 1990. Between 1975 and 1996, the United States accepted many of these Hmong refugees for resettlement. Approximately 250,000 Hmong currently live in the United States, and the number of Hmong in the United States is increasing faster than any other Asian group. From 1980 and 1990, the Hmong population in the United States increased by 1,165% (Yang & Murphy, 1993).

Many aspects of Hmong culture have been shaped by their experience as a minority group in every country where they have lived. They have worked hard to preserve their cultural identity and, as their patterns of migration show, will move rather than be forced to assimilate. Their immigration to the United States has challenged the

integrity of their culture more than any other relocation because it is difficult to remain completely autonomous here. The United States intentionally dispersed the Hmong when they were resettled here to lessen the impact on any one community, and it has not been possible for them to lead self-sustaining lives as farmers as they have always done in the past. Through secondary migration within the United States the Hmong have regrouped themselves somewhat, but most recognize that some degree of integration and involvement in the broader community is essential. It is important, therefore, to create opportunities for Hmong refugees to acquire the necessary skills, language ability, and resources to successfully make the transition to life in the United States, while still preserving their Hmong identity.

In order to promote the well-being of Hmong refugees, it is essential to understand some of the important aspects of Hmong culture and its strengths. Hmong culture is a collectivist, clan-based culture (Scott, 1982), which, as opposed to American and other Western cultures that emphasize autonomy, privacy, and individual initiative, is based upon a “we” orientation and the importance of group solidarity, duties and obligations, and a collective identity. There are approximately 18 different Hmong clans⁶ in the United States and decisions made by the clan leaders typically affect all members of the clan in a given city or area. Solidarity with family, clan, and other Hmong people is fundamental to Hmong culture. For instance, relatives who are considered cousins in American culture are considered brothers and sisters by the Hmong, while anyone in the

⁶ Clans are patrilineal, kinship-based groups, signified by last name. Thus there are only 18 last names within the Hmong community in the United States, and all Hmong people with the same last name are considered to be members of the same clan. In traditional Hmong culture, people cannot marry someone within their own clan. Women become a part of their husband’s clan when they marry. Men of the same clan, regardless of whether they have ever met before, address each other as “younger or older brother,” indicating the closeness and familial obligation members of a particular clan feel for one another. For a detailed description of the Hmong kinship and clan system, see Dunnigan (1982).

same clan is considered a cousin. This emphasis on clan and community is an important strength of the Hmong community, which commonly results in an incredibly extensive and strong support system. Hmong families often pool economic resources and support each other in making decisions and overcoming hardships. More than any other immigrant group, the Hmong have succeeded in preserving many aspects of their culture, interdependency, and sense of ethnic community (Fadiman, 1997a).

Another strength within Hmong culture is the value placed on education and the strong motivation of many individuals to take advantage of educational and other opportunities to improve their lives here. These attributes have been important as many Hmong struggle to overcome the traumas they have experienced in the past while facing the transition to life in a new and extremely different culture and environment. They are trying to preserve their own cultural traditions while also developing proficiency and capabilities in the United States.

Despite these strengths, the Hmong have been particularly challenged in their adjustment to life in the United States. Numerous factors have contributed to their difficulties. In all four phases of the refugee experience – pre-flight, flight, temporary settlement, and resettlement (Ager, 1999) – the Hmong have endured great difficulties. Although these experiences of course vary by individual, there is a somewhat typical trajectory of occurrences. In terms of their pre-flight experiences, most Hmong were displaced in Laos for years before they fled to Thailand (Dunnigan et al., 1996). During this time, they were usually surviving in the forest, with no safe place to go and very limited food, shelter, and water. Families were often separated as many men were fighting in the war, in which numerous soldiers and civilians were killed. Except for a

very small number of Hmong who were airlifted from Laos, most Hmong refugees' flight from Laos to Thailand took months or even years and was treacherous and often traumatic. Many people died or lost family members along the way. Their temporary settlement in Thailand was not very temporary for many Hmong refugees, who frequently spent extended periods of time in refugee camps. For the most part, refugees were prohibited from leaving the confines of the camps, were not allowed to work, and received minimal food and clean water. Furthermore, many Hmong refugees were robbed or raped when they first reached Thailand, before being placed in a refugee camp.

In terms of resettlement in the United States, many factors have been particularly challenging for the Hmong, including: significant language and cultural differences, limited previous education (which puts any individual or group at a disadvantage in the United States), limited transferable occupational skills, and the particular context into which they were relocated (most Hmong arrived here in the 1980s in the midst of a severe economic recession with high unemployment). As a result of these factors, the Hmong have experienced a large gap between the abilities they possess and the needs they must fulfill here (Scott, 1982). In fact, statistics from the U.S. Department of Commerce indicate that the quality of life for the Hmong community is precarious. In 1990, their median household income was \$14,300, 67% of Hmong households received public assistance, 87% of Hmong lived in rental units, 86% did not have a high school degree, and 60% were linguistically isolated (Hein, 1995). In another study of refugee adjustment, over half of the Hmong refugees interviewed reported problems with psychological well-being, and their rate of distress was three times higher than that of other Americans (Rumbaut, 1991a).

Cultural conflict is another issue that deeply affects the well-being of Hmong women, men, families, and communities. Two issues have been particularly salient: the changing roles of men and women in the United States, and intergenerational issues among parents and their children.⁷ Similar to the treatment of women in the Western world until the last century, women in traditional Hmong culture had limited rights. They could not vote or hold office in the governance of Hmong communities. Decisions about their lives were primarily made by men – either their father and older brothers if they were unmarried or their husband and his clan elders. Although most Hmong people worked together in Laos to grow rice and other crops, traditional Hmong culture maintained a gendered division of labor in which women were responsible for household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing. In addition, any educational opportunities that existed were typically allocated to men and boys. These patterns have been somewhat disrupted through the experience of becoming refugees. Traditional roles for Hmong women and men first began to change in refugee camps, where women were often the only members of the family able to earn money (through sewing and selling their traditional embroidery – *paj ntaub*). The necessity for Hmong women to work continued in the United States for most families, since surviving on one minimum-wage paycheck is nearly impossible. In addition, Hmong women began to become aware of the rights of women here and to see the educational opportunities for women and girls. Furthermore, certain practices that had existed to a limited extent in traditional Hmong culture, such as polygamy and what the Hmong call “catch-hand marriage” (marriage kidnapping), were not legal in the United States. The degree to which traditional gender roles in Hmong culture have shifted in the United States varies, depending on factors

⁷ For a more detailed discussion, see Faderman (1998).

such as newcomers' age, exposure to American society, and the openness of family members to change. However, the changes that have occurred have often been accompanied by conflict, as might be expected in any relationship in which power dynamics shift. However, as with many other Americans, men remain the primary decision-makers in many Hmong households and families.

Intergenerational issues are common among all parents and children, but are often particularly challenging for refugees and other newcomers to the United States as children usually acculturate more quickly because they tend to have more contact with the new society through school and because they learn English more easily. This has been particularly true for the Hmong, because many members of the older generations do not have any previous education and are not literate, which makes learning a new language even more difficult. As a result, family roles are often reversed because parents may have to rely on their children to translate and interact with the outside world. This is exceptionally difficult for many Hmong families because of the traditional age hierarchy within Hmong culture. Hmong elders are very much respected, revered, and taken care of in traditional Hmong culture. They are deferred to when family decisions are made. However, this is counter to the ways in which older people are typically treated in the United States.

Furthermore, refugee parents are often troubled as their children begin to quickly adopt "American" ways of dressing, speaking, and acting and lose aspects of their parents' culture. In some cases, children forget how to speak Hmong, which can make communication among parents and children difficult or impossible. In addition, Hmong parents' traditional methods of disciplining their children may not be acceptable or legal

in the United States, but they may not be aware of viable alternatives, which can make parents feel helpless and like they are losing control over their children. Newcomer children and teenagers often feel caught between the expectations of their parents and the expectations or cultural demands of their school and peers. In conclusion, although circumstances for many Hmong individuals and their families have improved in the last decade, the numerous challenges they still face suggest that it is important to consider processes that might promote their well-being and provide opportunities for them to constructively address the conflicts and difficulties they may be experiencing.

Community Participation

Participation in one's community has been linked with numerous positive outcomes, including individual, intergroup, and community benefits. Many researchers have found that participation can be an empowering process for individuals (e.g., Florin & Wandersman, 1984; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman, 1995). For refugees, participation in the broader community is an important process through which they can acquire the language skills, cultural knowledge, and connections they need to access resources and adjust to a new, unknown environment. Intergroup benefits include the facilitation of individuals' integration into their broader community (Tomeh, 1974). In addition, voluntary participation in integrative social settings can facilitate interactions, reduce prejudice, and increase understanding among members of different groups (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Jong, 1989; Kelly, Azelton, Burzette & Mock, 1994). There is also evidence that individuals' participation in voluntary organizations can lead to empowered communities that gain power, resources, and decision-making influence (e.g.,

Speer & Hughey, 1995) and is associated with improvements in the physical, social and economic conditions of neighborhoods (Florin & Wandersman, 1990).

Although community participation is a valuable process which contributes to both individual and community development, it is not necessarily common. Researchers have long recognized that only a small percentage of community members are actively involved in organizations and activities in their communities (Devereux, Bronfenbrenner, & Harding, 1960). Participation and local community involvement is often less common among recent refugees and immigrant subgroups that may have much to gain by becoming involved in their new communities.

Background Research

In order to begin to understand the challenges, issues, goals, and experiences of Hmong refugees in my community, for my master's thesis I conducted an ecological investigation of Hmong community participation which considered the contextual conditions within a particular setting (three multiethnic housing developments) and the characteristics of specific community members (54 Hmong refugees). Interviews with Hmong residents revealed that they participated both formally and informally in their communities and valued it highly, but that their involvement was limited. They were excluded from most meaningful avenues of participation because of multiple barriers, including language differences, time constraints, discrimination, and a lack of awareness of opportunities. No supports to address these issues existed in their communities.

In addition to the barriers they faced, many Hmong residents mentioned their inability to report problems, their lack of voice in the community, and beliefs that they could not affect change in their communities. Taken together, these experiences suggest

that the settings in which Hmong residents lived were not empowering and that they themselves were not empowered. Specifically, Hmong residents usually lacked the skills (language ability), knowledge (awareness of participation opportunities), and political efficacy (belief that they could make change), which are considered to be essential aspects of psychological empowerment and precursors of community participation (Zimmerman, 1995). Furthermore, their communities not only failed to foster the development of any of these abilities, but also often served to silence their voices.

These conditions suggest that an empowering setting would need to offer several opportunities for Hmong residents. First, residents would need opportunities to improve their English skills so they could participate in their communities in whatever ways they chose (e.g., formally, informally, socially, politically). Hmong residents would also need opportunities to define meaningful collective action as a community, to be heard by their communities, and to understand their potential roles in the democratic process in the United States. Providing these opportunities would be an important step toward making participation meaningful and empowering for Hmong residents. Several specific lessons were drawn from this initial research to inform the intervention that is the focus of the current research.

(1) Participation. Participation in the broader community may be best fostered by first creating settings which enable refugees to develop the abilities, skills, and understanding of the system that are necessary to empower them and their communities to address the issues they choose. This might best be achieved by initially focusing on opportunities for refugees to participate within their own ethnic communities. It may be that this within-group community building is a precondition for meaningful participation

in the larger community. Jong (1989) suggests that in situations in which linguistic and cultural barriers are large, establishing ethnically-based groups first may be necessary in order to achieve greater participation and involvement of marginalized members of the community.

(2) Education. Hmong residents who were interviewed recognized that education was essential to their ability to thrive in the United States and many (77%) expressed hope for increased educational opportunities. This is important because education is a resource that is related to the positive adjustment of refugees (e.g., Rumbaut, 1996) and that opens up possibilities and choices for people in the United States. Residents' request for education also suggests that they were not able to access existing educational opportunities, such as adult education. There may be barriers that prevent Hmong from taking advantage of these opportunities, such as lack of transportation or childcare. However, it was clear that educational opportunities in their own communities were wanted and needed by many residents. It is also important to note that Hmong expressed many different educational needs, which suggests the importance of one-on-one learning directed by each individual.

An effective intervention would create settings that foster meaningful participation and provide educational opportunities needed to support this process. However, for real empowerment of individuals and communities to occur, improved access to community resources is also essential. Without this, communities will not experience real gains in power (Speer & Hughey, 1995).

Rationale for Intervention

Based upon the issues and interests in the Hmong community in Lansing, the research on refugee well-being, and the principles of ecological and empowerment perspectives, I designed an intervention called the Refugee Well-Being Project with two major elements: an advocacy component, based upon the Community Advocacy model (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999), which involved the mobilization of resources with and for Hmong families, and an innovative group learning component, called learning circles, which involved cultural exchange, focus on community issues, and one-on-one learning opportunities for Hmong adults. The fundamental goal of the intervention was to improve Hmong refugees' quality of life and psychological well-being by creating opportunities for individual and collective empowerment and by improving the community's responsiveness to their needs. Specifically, the program was intended to provide opportunities for Hmong participants to contribute their knowledge, skills, and abilities to their communities, acquire new skills and knowledge, direct their own learning, participate in and understand democratic processes in their communities, raise their critical consciousness, overcome feelings of powerlessness, and increase their access to community resources.

In order to accomplish these goals, trained undergraduate students worked with Hmong adults and their families in numerous ways for a period of six months. Undergraduates participated in the learning circles, including facilitating and sharing their experiences during the cultural exchange and working one-on-one with Hmong adults on whatever each adult wanted to learn (i.e., learning English, preparing for the U.S. citizenship exam). Undergraduates also worked individually with Hmong families as their advocates to help ensure their access to resources and opportunities in the

community in areas such as employment, health care, housing, or education. These efforts also involved the undergraduates transferring their advocacy skills to the Hmong families by showing the families how to do things rather than doing things for them and by documenting the steps that they took together to mobilize resources so that the families would know how to obtain resources they needed in the future when the students were no longer there. The details of the learning and advocacy components of the intervention are described in the Method section.

Rationale for Advocacy Component

Access to Resources. Refugees and immigrants who resettle in the United States often struggle to access the resources they need from their communities. They often face numerous barriers, including language and cultural differences and lack of knowledge of the system. Also, refugees may not be aware of their rights and responsibilities with respect to the community and community resources. In particular, the needs of Asian refugees are often ignored because service providers believe they prefer to seek and receive help exclusively from members of their own communities (Lee, 1986; Land, 1988; Starret, Mindell, & Wright, 1983).

Furthermore, systems such as the health care system, welfare system, educational institutions, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service are often biased and unresponsive to the needs of refugees. Workplaces are another setting in which refugees with limited English proficiency are often treated unfairly. Gutierrez & Lewis (1999) note that many service providers and agencies are inadvertently ethnocentric, assuming that particular ethnic groups do not access and use services because of a problem inherent to the ethnic group rather than with the services offered – what Gutierrez and Lewis call

an individual fallacy assumption. Rather than preferring to rely only on members of their own group, refugees are often forced to do so because many communities are not necessarily receptive to newcomers (e.g., Benson, 1990; Goode, 1990) and refugees often experience racism and/or prejudice (e.g., Hein, 1995). Although ethnic support networks and mutual assistance associations are important sources of resources and support for many refugees, they are not necessarily adequately prepared and funded to meet all of the needs of refugees or to connect them with resources in the larger community. For all these reasons, increasing refugees' access to resources and working to change unfair policies and systems are important aspects of facilitating their well-being. In order to accomplish this goal, it is essential to consider the cultural background of a particular refugee group.

Advocacy interventions. The advocacy component of the intervention was based on the Community Advocacy model, which has been successfully applied to women and children who have experienced domestic violence (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999) and to juvenile offenders (Davidson, Redner, Blakely, Mitchell, & Emshoff, 1987). These advocacy projects are predicated on the belief that access to community resources is fundamental to promoting the well-being of disenfranchised individuals and groups. After working with an advocate for ten weeks, women who had experienced domestic violence were less likely to experience violence in the future, had higher quality of life and social support and were better able to access resources than a control group of women (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Thus, research suggests that the advocacy model on which the proposed advocacy component is based is successful in improving individuals' well-being.

Rationale for Learning Component

Popular education/transformative learning. As newcomers to the United States, refugees often need to acquire new skills and knowledge, such as English proficiency, knowledge about political, social, and economic processes here, literacy, and job skills. This type of learning is termed instrumental learning and is an important aspect of empowering individuals because it enables individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to participate in their communities (Zimmerman, 1995). However, learning can further empower disenfranchised individuals by raising their consciousness, increasing their understanding of their oppression and the structural forces affecting them, and providing mechanisms through which they can work collectively for social change. Freire (1998) terms this “education as cultural action for freedom” (p.476). This type of learning is also referred to as popular education (Cunningham, 1992) or transformative learning (Cunningham, 1998), and places individuals and their experiences in the center of their own learning, as subjects (rather than objects) of their learning (Freire, 1998).

Paulo Freire and adult/popular education. Many educators have recognized a need for learning that helps people critically reflect and analyze, that unites them to work toward social justice, and that helps them understand their social location and oppression. Freire (1970) was one of the first to problematize what he called the banking method of learning – education in which the teacher is seen as the owner of knowledge that he or she deposits to students. Subsequently, there emerged many ideas and critiques of traditional educational practices and new theories of transformative learning. The popular education perspective argues that individuals are shaped by their context,

including their social location, and therefore it focuses on transforming social structures in order to achieve a more just society. Education is seen as central to the process of social transformation. This perspective is exemplified by Freire (1970, 1998) and Horton (1990), among others. Freire describes how “cultures of silence” are created by oppressive forces either within or outside of a particular society which serve to keep certain individuals and groups poor, oppressed, and not aware of the true causes of their conditions. Through social transformation, Freire argues, the “cultures of silence” can be broken and silenced individuals can gain a voice in their societies.

Jane Addams and the Settlement House Movement. The work of Jane Addams is also fundamental to an understanding of adult/popular education and the educational component of the proposed intervention. In 1889, Jane Addams formed Hull House, one of the first settlement houses in Chicago, because she felt that it was not enough to take responsibility for the well-being of friends and family, but that responsibility for immigrants’ well-being must be shared by all community members. At that time 80% of Chicago residents were immigrants or children of immigrants, many of whom were struggling to adjust to life in the United States and were subject to physical and political exploitation.

Jane Addams’ work with immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s was predicated on several beliefs, including the interdependence of all human beings and the importance of education as the basis of social change and the vehicle through which immigrants could contribute their unique abilities, skills, and vision to their communities. She believed that education must begin from the experiences of the learners but must also help learners to see their place in the larger world. She wrote, “As democracy modifies

our conception of life, it constantly raises the value and function of each member of the community, however humble he [sic] may be... we are gradually requiring of each educator that he shall free the powers of each man and connect him with the rest of life...we are skeptical of the moral idealism of the few and demand the education of the many, that there may be greater freedom, strength, and subtlety of intercourse and hence an increase of dynamic power” (Addams, 1964, pp. 178-179).

Popular education and Freire and Addams’ approaches to learning are intimately linked to the processes of empowerment, participation, and access to resources. They recognize education as a social as well as individual act (Cunningham, 1998) and they problematize a sole focus on individual learning without accompanying change in social structures or mobilization of resources.

Learning Circles at the Jane Addams School for Democracy. Based upon Freire and Addams’ work, Learning Circles were developed in 1998 by the Jane Addams School for Democracy in St. Paul, Minnesota. Although no formal evaluations of these Learning Circles exist, qualitative narratives in the book *We Are the Freedom People* and my observations of Hmong adults and college students participating together in these circles, suggest that they are powerful tools for facilitating cultural exchange and appreciation, developing the English proficiency and citizenship knowledge of Hmong participants, and fostering Hmong refugees’ participation and empowerment. The learning component of the intervention was modeled after these Learning Circles and provided an opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness more thoroughly.

Rationale for Combining Advocacy and Learning Components: Empowerment

It is important to note that the learning and advocacy components of the intervention were two inextricable parts of one holistic intervention. The intervention was centered around the group learning circles: undergraduates and Hmong participants met in the learning circles for almost one month before beginning advocacy together, and often they would discuss their advocacy efforts during the learning circles to share ideas and resources with other group members, to address an unfair institution or system collectively, and/or to get the input or translation assistance of the group facilitators. I designed the intervention after working on an advocacy intervention for women who experienced domestic violence (see Sullivan & Bybee, 1999), through which I realized that refugee families faced many of the same struggles accessing resources and being ignored by systems that were supposed to assist them. However, I was also aware that an individual advocacy intervention would be ineffective because it would not build on the strengths of the Hmong community, would not provide opportunities for collective validation and action, and would not address the learning needs of Hmong refugees. Furthermore, the most important need expressed by Hmong women in the community was for opportunities to learn English and study for the U.S. Citizenship Exam. Thus, by combining the advocacy and learning components, the intervention had the potential to incorporate the strengths, needs, and wants of the Hmong community. In addition, the intervention as a whole addressed the multiple aspects of the empowerment process (Parsons, Gutierrez, and Cox, 1998): 1) Building skills and knowledge for critical thinking and action (e.g., awareness of oppression, English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, advocacy skills); 2) changing attitudes and beliefs (e.g., value of own culture and knowledge, self-efficacy, ability to make change); 3) validation through collective

experiences; and 4) securing real increases in resources and power through action and systems-based advocacy.

The Refugee Well-Being Project was designed to enable Hmong participants to take greater control over their lives by providing mechanisms through which they could define and solve their own problems, rather than rely on outside “experts.” Gaventa (1995) points out both external barriers (e.g., lack of organization, lack of voice in community, limited funds to influence politics) and internal barriers (e.g., lack of critical consciousness, lack of understanding of possibilities for social change), which exclude many disenfranchised people from meaningful participation in their communities. Thus, effective participation and real gains in power require both community organizing in order to bring a group together and to establish a power-base, as well as popular education in order to enable individuals to transform how they think about themselves and their place in the world (Gordon, 1998). The intervention addressed both of these components by offering opportunities for transformative learning in the learning circles and for community organization through both cultural exchange and the mobilization of community resources. This project was based on the premise that “participation means that there has to be real surrender of power by the ‘experts’” (Ashworth, 1997, p.102). In this intervention, Hmong participants directed their own advocacy and controlled their own learning. No one involved in the intervention was an “expert.” Rather, Hmong participants and undergraduate students learned from each other – including sharing cultural knowledge, skills, language, and information about resources. Thus, the learning and advocacy components of this intervention were specifically designed to promote the empowerment and well-being of Hmong refugees.

Cultural Appropriateness of the Intervention

The advocacy and learning components of the intervention were also linked together for several other important reasons. First of all, the components addressed the particular needs of refugees (i.e., increased English proficiency, processes for transferring existing skills and knowledge, access to community resources). In addition, however, the combination of the two intervention components was specifically structured to take into account the unique attributes of Hmong culture, particularly its collective orientation.

It is important to understand and account for the role culture plays in people's behavior and values, especially when designing an intervention designed to promote their well-being (Berry, 1998). It is particularly important for refugees because they resettle in a new environment and may not have access to any services or resources that are culturally appropriate and relevant (Berry, 1998). Therefore, simply applying an existing intervention or model of service, such as the Community Advocacy model, would most likely have been ineffective. Individuals are less likely to participate in community interventions and projects that are not culturally relevant or appropriate (Marin, 1993; Strawn, 1994). In addition, interventions developed and implemented without cultural awareness often fail, and can even result in the disempowerment of individuals or communities that researchers intended to empower (Strawn, 1994). An example cited by Strawn (1994) is a perinatal outreach and education program whose goal was to empower low-income women from diverse backgrounds by providing them with access to resources and a social support network. Although the intervention was structured with careful attention to superficial cultural and linguistic issues (i.e., use of bilingual case workers, translation of materials), the researchers inadvertently imposed individual

constructs of empowerment on communities which had strengths (strong social support networks and collective ideologies) that should have been incorporated into any effort to enable the women to meet their needs and exercise control over their lives.

Stawn's case study is particularly relevant because it highlights the differences between individually and collectively oriented cultures and the importance of this distinction in developing successful interventions. Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi and Yoon (1994) have found that an individualist/collectivist model is an important model for understanding many cultural differences because it coherently summarizes fundamental differences between the rules, practices, and values of groups of people. Collectively oriented cultures value the well-being of the group above that of the individual, and the proposed intervention is designed with that fundamental consideration in mind. The Refugee Well-Being Project was structured around a group learning component, which brought Hmong community members together to learn and address issues collectively. This group learning component was important both in making the intervention culturally appropriate and in enabling Hmong refugees to build upon the skills and cultural strengths they had to contribute to their communities. Thus, the group learning component was based on the collective orientation of Hmong culture and the particular needs of refugees. In conclusion, it was important to design the Refugee Well-Being Project with careful attention to the attributes of Hmong culture and the particular strengths, interests, and needs of Hmong refugees in Lansing.

Rationale for the Use of Paraprofessionals

Michigan State University has an extensive history of successfully training undergraduate paraprofessionals to work as advocates and change agents with

disenfranchised groups and individuals (e.g., Davidson, Redner, Blakely, Mitchell, & Emshoff, 1987; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). The use of paraprofessionals (as opposed to social workers or other professionals) has several advantages, including lower cost to the community and less stigma for participants.

Research Hypotheses

The goal of the Refugee Well-Being Project was to implement and evaluate a learning and advocacy intervention designed to promote the well-being of Hmong refugees. Specifically, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Hmong participants' English proficiency will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.
2. Hmong participants' knowledge of United States government and history (required for the U.S. citizenship exam) will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.
3. Hmong participants' access to resources will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.
4. Hmong participants' community participation will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.
5. Hmong participants' quality of life will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.
6. Hmong participants' psychological well-being will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.
 - a. Hmong participants' happiness will increase over time during and following their participation in the intervention.

- b. Hmong participants' distress will decrease over time during and following their participation in the intervention.**
- 7. The processes of increased psychological well-being, quality of life, and community participation will be mediated by improvement in English proficiency, increased citizenship knowledge, and increased access to resources.**

METHOD

Setting

The Refugee Well-Being Project was fully based in the communities of the Hmong participants. The learning circles occurred at the community centers of two public housing developments where approximately half of the participants lived. These housing developments provide subsidized housing to low-income Lansing residents. Thus, the project location was convenient for most Hmong participants and was accessible to all interested Hmong residents in public housing, regardless of available transportation. In addition, by conducting the program in Hmong participants' immediate community, a safer, more familiar environment in which to learn and work together was created.

The community centers at the housing developments had community rooms with kitchens for social events and meetings, tutoring rooms with computers, Head Start facilities, office space for the managers and community police officers, and laundry facilities. The learning circles were held in the community rooms, which were large spaces with moveable tables and chairs that could be configured in multiple ways.

Given the location of the learning circles, the project involved the cooperation of the Lansing Housing Commission (LHC), the nonprofit organization that administers public housing in Lansing. As the Public Housing Authority for Lansing, the Lansing Housing Commission oversees a total of 950 rental housing units, including the two housing developments where the learning circles were held, three additional housing developments, and scattered single family and duplex rental homes in Lansing. These

sites provide subsidized housing for low-income families and senior citizens; all residents pay 30% of their income for rent.

A four-year relationship existed between the Resident Initiatives Coordinator and other LHC staff and myself, over which time I had facilitated ESL programs for Hmong and Somali women that met in two of the community centers. The LHC approved of the Refugee Well Being Project and provided space because it was consistent with the mission of the LHC, which is to provide safe and affordable housing and assist residents in increasing their economic and social opportunities through the development of additional skills and knowledge. LHC perceived that the project would serve their residents by providing them with learning opportunities and increased access to resources and by bringing Hmong residents into the community centers to increasing their contact with other residents, staff, and resources. An Administrative Agreement with the LHC was obtained before the project began.

It is also important to note that the undergraduate advocates were trained to focus on developing resources and planning activities within the Hmong families' natural environments. The purpose of this focus was to ensure that Hmong participants could develop knowledge about resources and activities in their own communities so that they would be more likely to be able to continue to access the resources after the project ended and the undergraduates no longer worked with them.

Project Facilitators/Coordinators

The project was co-facilitated by two Hmong American women and me (a white American woman). As discussed previously, I had worked extensively with Hmong people in Thailand and the United States for seven years and I spoke and understood

some Hmong. The two Hmong co-facilitators were both bicultural and bilingual. One of the co-facilitators was a 29-year old Head Start assistant, who was married and had two children. She was born in Laos, spent time in a refugee camp in Thailand, and resettled in the United States when she was 14 years old. The second co-facilitator was a 22-year old nursing student who was first generation born in the United States. She was single and had no children.

I conceived and developed this project in close consultation with Hmong adults in the community. The Hmong co-facilitators were initially hired to help recruit participants, to translate during cultural exchange time, to be available during one-on-one learning time to translate concepts, and to facilitate communication between undergraduates and Hmong participants in or outside of the learning circles. However, their roles quickly expanded and they became co-leaders and facilitators of the learning circles and the project in general. They helped lead and participate in cultural exchanges, and they were both teachers and learners (as was everyone in the learning circles). Many Hmong participants confided in them if they were concerned about an aspect of the project, and thus they were able to facilitate communication and understanding between Hmong participants, undergraduates, and me. In addition, they often accompanied Hmong participants and their advocates on trips to the doctor, the bank, or other places where translation or explanation might be required. Most importantly, they were truly leaders and facilitators of the learning circles and were an integral and essential aspect of the entire project. It would not have succeeded without their knowledge, expertise, hard work, and interpersonal skills. However, they were careful not to allow undergraduates and Hmong participants to become too dependent on them, in order to maintain an

emphasis on advocates transferring skills to their families and on encouraging participants to practice their English as much as was feasible. The co-facilitators were paid \$12 per hour for their time.

The first semester of the course was co-taught by a 23-year old Hmong man, who was a student at Michigan State University, and me. The Hmong man was born in Laos, lived in refugee camps in Thailand for several years, and moved to the United States when he was 14 years old. He was bilingual and bicultural and was an important resource for students during class discussions, role plays, and supervision. He had planned to continue as a co-supervisor during the second semester of the course but was unable to due to personal reasons. The co-facilitators and I decided not to try to replace him, given that relationships with students and Hmong participants had already been established.

Participants

Hmong Participants

Twenty-eight Hmong adults (26 women, two men) from 27 families participated in the project. They were an average of 41 years old ($SD = 13.99$, range 22 to 77), most (79%) were married (four were widowed, one was single and one was legally separated), and they had an average of six children ($SD = 2.73$, range 0 to 11). Participants had an average of seven people living in their household ($SD = 2.56$, range 3 to 11), with an average of four children ($SD = 2.28$, range 0 to 9) and three adults ($SD = 1.10$, range 1 to 5). Fifty-four percent (15) of participants were employed, the majority of whom (33%) baked donuts for a local bakery chain. Other jobs included assembly line work (27%), working in a sewing factory (20%), and working in a laundry (20%). Eighty-two percent

of participants had no previous education, none of the participants had a high school degree from the United States (one woman graduated from high school in Laos), and 33% were not literate in any language.

Participants had been in the United States an average of 12 years ($SD = 5.90$, range 6 months to 22 years) and resettled here at the average age of 29 ($SD = 13.25$, range 16 to 66). Fourteen were residents of public housing, ten owned their own homes, and four rented apartments or houses. The majority of the Hmong participants were among the second wave of Hmong refugees to arrive in the United States (Yang & Murphy, 1993), possessing less education and other resources and being less equipped for life here than those who came in the first wave. Within the local Hmong community, they were among those struggling the most – many living in public housing, and most having no previous education and very low levels of English proficiency despite not being recent newcomers.

Originally, the intervention was open to the participation of all Hmong adults in the community. However, much greater interest was expressed by Hmong women, and, therefore, the project was predominantly an intervention with refugee women. There are several reasons this may have occurred. First, several of the women who participated did not work outside the home or drive, and thus had more time to participate and were highly interested in a project that provided them with interactions with other people outside their homes. (This is also the case for the two men who participated, who were both relatively older and did not work outside the home or drive). However, many of the participants not only worked full-time but also took care of their children, which suggests other important considerations. One such consideration was that Hmong women were

less likely to have had any previous education in Laos and were therefore more likely to be interested in the type of learning opportunities offered in the learning circles. Finally, another salient issue was that the three project leaders (the Hmong co-facilitators and I) were all women, and thus the project was perceived in the Hmong community as a project for women. (There is a fairly clear distinction between men and women's domains and activities in traditional Hmong culture.)

Participants had the option of participating in either morning or evening learning circles and it is interesting to note that the morning learning circle, which had nine Hmong women and two Hmong men, was different than the evening learning circle, which had 16 Hmong women. Although many of the differences were due to the dynamic nature of the learning circles and the different personalities of all participants, the learning circles were also somewhat gendered, in that the evening learning circle tended to develop more typically women-centered activities, such as the exchange of Hmong videos, traditional embroidery (*paj ntaub*), and herbal medicines. It is likely that the presence of the two men in the morning learning circle had a significant effect on shaping it because men usually play a prominent and dominant role in Hmong culture.

Recruitment of Hmong Participants

Individuals' backgrounds are very important to most Hmong people and the mutual exchange of this information is an essential part of establishing trust. Thus, non-Hmong individuals need to be able to form a connection with Hmong people when they first meet. Even within the Hmong community, it is important when meeting other Hmong to know their clan name and who their parents are. I worked with Hmong people in a refugee camp in Thailand for two years and was involved with Hmong residents in

the Lansing community for several years – conducting research and teaching English. The knowledge acquired and relationships established were important in recruiting participants and creating a successful intervention. However, it was also essential to be working in collaboration with Hmong community members. Therefore, potential participants were either contacted by me, accompanied by one of the Hmong co-facilitators of the project, or solely by one of the Hmong co-facilitators.

All Hmong families living in the public housing developments in the city were contacted first, by visits to their homes in which one of the Hmong co-facilitators and I would describe the project and invite adults in the household to participate. There were a total of 25 Hmong families in the housing developments and 13 (52%) chose to participate. When it was determined that extra space was available, the project was opened up to other Hmong families in the community (based on the networks of myself and the Hmong co-facilitators and spreading the word throughout the Hmong community). Initially, some Hmong families were hesitant, and often called their friends or family to determine what others knew about the project and its facilitators. However, within the first week that the project began, interested Hmong adults were showing up spontaneously at the learning circles and a waiting list was created.

Undergraduate Participants

This project was implemented with the use of 27 trained paraprofessionals, who were undergraduate students at Michigan State University. Of the 27 students, there were 20 women and seven men, 19 European Americans, three Latino/as, two Asian/Asian Americans, two Arab Americans, and one African American/Native American. All but

one were juniors and seniors. Students made a two-semester commitment to the project, earned eight course credits, and received 48 hours of training over a period of 12 weeks.

Recruitment and Training of Undergraduate Participants

Given that this project involved close interaction with refugees and their families and a significant time commitment from all participants, it was important to recruit undergraduates who were mature, flexible, enthusiastic, and had a clear understanding of what their participation in the project would involve. Undergraduates in the College of Social Science were notified about the Refugee Well Being Project through a variety of methods, including emails, flyers, and discussions with undergraduate advisors. They were required to attend an orientation session, which included an explanation of the project and the time commitment involved. At the orientation, students were asked to complete a written application which contained questions about their relevant experience, their interest in the project, why they believed they would contribute to the project, and their ability to meet the time requirements. Students were selected for the course based upon their applications and their interactions with me during the orientations.

The undergraduates' training began in the first semester of their course (two months before the commencement of the six-month intervention) and was based on a manualized curriculum (see Goodkind, 2000) adapted from the Advocate Training Manual of the Community Advocacy Project (Sullivan, 1998). Students received weekly grades based on their comprehension of the material, which included readings and units on adult education and social change, refugee learning, specifics of the experiences and culture of Hmong refugees, the special needs of refugee children, oppression and diversity, and collective action and the immigrant experience. Students also participated

in discussions, role plays, class exercises, community projects, and thought papers to prepare them for their work with a family. In addition, students learned how to be effective advocates and about the importance of community resources and community responsiveness in meeting the needs of refugees, as well as how to use empathy, values clarification and problem solving skills. Another important component of training involved helping undergraduates identify and make connections with community resources and networks, so that they could successfully link the Hmong families they worked with to needed resources or recognize when systems-level advocacy was necessary to obtain resources that were not available. Training continued during the first month of the learning circles. For the final five months of the intervention, weekly supervision replaced training. Undergraduates met for supervision once a week in small groups of six to eight students to review the progress of their advocacy and discuss their experiences in the learning circles. Each unit of training included weekly written and/or oral quizzes and reflection papers to check students' comprehension of the material, as well as readings and activities (see Appendix D for a detailed description of each unit).

Components of the Intervention

Learning Circles

The learning circles were based on a model created by the Jane Addams School for Democracy in Minneapolis and have their theoretical foundation in the principles of popular education and transformative learning, as discussed previously. In addition, given the collective orientation of Hmong culture, the learning circles were important because they provided a group setting in which Hmong refugees could learn and collectively address community issues. Participants met in learning circles twice weekly

at one of the housing development community centers for six months. Each meeting was two hours in length and was composed of equal numbers of Hmong participants and undergraduate students.

Participants had the option of joining morning learning circles or evening learning circles. This accommodated people who worked either 1st or 2nd shift or who had different childcare responsibilities. Also, the morning and evening learning circles were held at different housing developments (to ensure that locations were accessible), and transportation was provided for participants who needed it. Twelve Hmong adults (ten women, two men) and 11 undergraduates participated in the morning learning circles and 16 Hmong women and 16 undergraduates participated in the evening learning circles.

The learning circles involved two components: cultural exchange and one-on-one learning. Cultural exchange occurred for the first 30 to 45 minutes of each meeting and was facilitated together by an undergraduate and a Hmong participant. Initially, the Hmong co-facilitators and I also led some of the discussions. In order to enable all participants to share in the discussion, regardless of English or Hmong language ability, the Hmong co-facilitators translated Hmong to English and English to Hmong throughout the cultural exchange discussions. The purpose of the cultural exchange was to provide a forum for Hmong residents and undergraduate students to learn from each other, share ideas, develop plans for collective actions, and realize the important contributions they were capable of making.

Discussion topics (primarily chosen by Hmong and undergraduate participants) included: the presidential election and process (as the intervention was occurring during the 2000 presidential election), the Bill of Rights and a comparison of rights in Laos and

the United States, holidays celebrated by different group members (e.g., Thanksgiving, Hmong New Year, Valentine's Day, Passover), ideas about how to raise children in the United States, health beliefs, stereotyping, and genetic cloning. In addition, numerous guest speakers were invited to the learning circles, including a City Clerk who brought a voting machine and demonstrated its use, a union organizer who discussed workplace issues and workers' rights, two representatives from a Hmong woman's organization in Detroit, and a Hmong youth leader who focused on issues youth face in school. Finally, group members took several field trips, including a visit to the Capitol building to see the state legislature, a trip to the state museum, and a trip to hear President Bill Clinton speak (see Appendix A for a complete list of learning circle discussion topics and activities).

The second component of the learning circles was one-on-one learning. For the remaining 1 ¼ to 1 ½ hours of the meeting time, undergraduates and Hmong participants worked in pairs and focused on whatever each Hmong adult wanted to learn (e.g., speaking, reading, and/or writing English, studying for the citizenship exam, learning to complete employment applications and practice interviews, or any area of learning each chose). This aspect of the one-on-one learning was very important and different from most other learning situations. Vella (1994) calls this "participation of the learners in naming what is to be learned" (p. 3), and states that it is essential for effective adult learning. Hmong residents were actively engaged in their own learning processes and received individual attention, which provided them with control over their own learning and more concentrated learning time. It is also important to note that the undergraduates were also engaged in learning, as they learned about the culture, experiences, and knowledge of Hmong residents. Materials, such as citizenship study guides and English

as a Second Language (ESL) materials (picture and word cards, workbooks), were available to facilitate learning.

As the project developed, the learning circles took shape in unexpected ways. This was intentional – based on the assumption that by creating the space for Hmong adults and undergraduate students to learn together and develop relationships, they would make the learning circles into places and experiences that were fun, welcoming, and beneficial. For instance, many Hmong and undergraduate participants brought snacks to learning circles, prepared and brought food to celebrate holidays together, tried on each other's traditional clothes, took pictures, and planned field trips together. Exchanges were not only material, but emotional as well – there were commonly discussions of pregnancies, illnesses, friends and family, and other signs of mutual support.

Advocacy

Once relationships began to form between individual Hmong participants and undergraduate students, each undergraduate was matched with a participating Hmong adult, with whom they had been working during the learning circles, to serve as an advocate for that person and her family. Rather than deciding who would work together, I allowed relationships between the Hmong participants and undergraduates to develop naturally, and people tended to gravitate towards someone who matched their personality and style of learning.⁸ It is important to note that relationships between Hmong participants and undergraduates formed during the learning circles, **before** sending the students into the homes of Hmong families to do advocacy. As discussed in more detail

⁸ It is important to note that gender was a consideration when undergraduate and Hmong participants were forming into pairs. There were seven undergraduate men. Two were partners with the two Hmong men in the project. The other five worked with Hmong women. The co-facilitators and I made sure that all of the Hmong women who were matched with a male student felt comfortable with the arrangement and that it

previously, forming a connection with a Hmong individual is essential to developing a good relationship. In addition, the continuation of the learning circles during the advocacy component was essential because these bi-weekly meetings provided a forum for Hmong adults and undergraduates to share advocacy successes and struggles with each other and to access a translator to facilitate communication when necessary. The intervention was not only an intervention with individuals, but also with the Hmong community as a whole. This is an important distinction, given the collective orientation of Hmong culture, as one of the strengths of Hmong culture is its collective orientation and the high level of mutual support within the Hmong community. These aspects of community life were important to preserve within this intervention and were important components of its success.

Each undergraduate spent an additional four to six hours each week (outside of the learning circles) with the Hmong adult and her family to provide advocacy on any issues the participant wanted to address. Advocacy continued for five months, with some undergraduates mainly working with the adult participant and some undergraduates working closely with both the Hmong adult and her children.⁹ The undergraduates first worked with the Hmong participant to identify the specific issues she wanted to focus on during the five months of advocacy. Often these discussions occurred during learning circles, so that translators could assist with communication. Once an unmet need was identified, the undergraduate and Hmong participant proceeded through the four phases of advocacy they had learned during their training: assessment, implementation,

would not be problematic for them or their families. In one case, we asked two pairs to trade to address the concerns of one Hmong woman who felt she needed to work with a female undergraduate.

⁹Each Hmong participant knew that her undergraduate could work on whatever issues she chose; some participants opted to use the undergraduate's time primarily to work on their own learning and resource

monitoring, and secondary implementation. They engaged in both individual and systems-level advocacy efforts (usually a combination of both), depending upon the need and the availability of resources.

During assessment, the unmet needs of the participant and her family, such as employment, education, health care, transportation, or material goods, were identified. Next, the undergraduate and Hmong participant attempted to identify any and all resources in the community that might meet this need. Once these potential resources were identified, implementation began. In this phase, the undergraduate and Hmong participant worked together to generate and/or mobilize community resources to satisfy the need. Monitoring was the important next step of advocacy, in which the undergraduate and Hmong participant evaluated the effectiveness of the resources mobilized in meeting the family's needs. If it was decided that the particular need had not been adequately addressed, then the undergraduate and Hmong participant began secondary implementation to mobilize additional resources or adjusted current efforts to further satisfy the need.

Because most families had multiple unmet needs, the undergraduate and Hmong participant were most often engaged simultaneously in several phases of the advocacy process, in order to address the various needs the Hmong participant had identified. It is important to note that the intervention process was different for each participant, because the learning and advocacy were directed by the Hmong individual and her family, rather than by what the undergraduate thought the participant might want or need.

needs while others elected to have a large amount of the advocacy and time outside of the learning circles focused on family issues and their children.

Case Illustration 1 – An Individual Example¹⁰

Mai, a 31 year-old Hmong woman with four kids, came to the United States in 1989. She and her family lived in the housing development where the morning learning circles were held, which fit well into her schedule because she worked 2nd shift (2:30 – 11:00pm) baking donuts at a local bakery chain. She joined the project with one main goal – to study for the U.S. citizenship test. From the first day, Mai was very intent and dedicated to studying, and in fact sometimes wanted to study her citizenship materials before cultural exchange time was completed. However, Mai and her advocate Sara did participate in cultural exchange and facilitated several interesting discussions.

Mai and Sara started to work with each other immediately during the first learning circle meeting and became attached very quickly. During only the second week of learning circles, Sara was a few minutes late and when she walked into the room, Mai burst out, “Sara, I thought you weren’t coming!” After the first month of working together during learning circles, Sara and Mai were “officially” matched together and Sara began her assessment with Mai by spending time getting to know Mai and her children and husband by doing things with them such as shopping and cooking. Initially, Mai did not express many unmet needs besides U.S. citizenship. Thus, Sara focused on helping Mai fill out her citizenship application, creating flashcards of the 100 citizenship questions for Mai, and spending extra time studying with her each week. Throughout the six months Sara and Mai worked together, however, several other needs emerged.

The first need to arise was that Mai and her family’s green cards were expiring and they were not sure what to do. They hoped to become citizens before renewing them,

¹⁰ Names and identifying information have been changed to protect the participants’ privacy.

but Sara contacted the Immigration and Naturalization Service, determined that they did need to renew their cards, and accompanied them to Detroit to do so. Soon after that and about halfway through the project, Mai's husband was laid off and Sara was able to help him file for unemployment. Around the same time, Mai developed a severely swollen neck and Sara learned that Mai did not have any health insurance. Sara found a free health clinic where Mai could be tested and treated and was also able to help Mai sign up for health insurance through the county. Another salient issue for Mai was the stress she endured at work. She and many of the other women in the project, who worked at the same bakery, were required to work many hours of overtime and were on their feet constantly. Mai frequently hurt her hands or back lifting heavy trays of donuts and shared with the group that she had miscarried during her last pregnancy due to the stress and strain of her job. We invited a union organizer to talk to the group about workers' rights and although Mai and the other women were wary about trying to organize a union at their workplace, they felt that they understood more about their rights and that there were people who cared about their predicaments.

Sara was extremely effective at not only locating resources for Mai and her family, but also in transferring the advocacy skills she had learned to Mai and her children. When Mai's oldest daughter needed a physical exam for school, she talked to Sara, who helped her find places to call and encouraged her to make the calls herself. Sara's enthusiasm and interest was effusive and she took outside initiative to find articles on Hmong culture to read and to share with Mai and her oldest daughter. By the end of the six months, Mai felt that she could continue to study for the citizenship test on her own. However, she invited Sara to Hmong New Year to celebrate with her family and

she made plans to continue to spend time with Sara – teaching Sara how to garden and doing fun things together with Sara and the children. At the final graduation ceremony, Mai brought Hmong clothes and asked Sara to wear them, which is a very high compliment.

Case Illustration 2 – A Group Example

One of the most salient unmet needs for many Hmong participants revolved around issues of U.S. citizenship. Within the Hmong community as a whole, obtaining U.S. citizenship is an important issue, particularly since 1996 when the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (better known as welfare reform) excluded legal residents of the United States who were not citizens from many benefits and the Anti-Terrorism Act denied them protection from deportation if they were convicted of a past or current crime. U.S. citizenship also provides the privilege of traveling with a U.S. Passport, enabling Hmong people to visit friends and family in Laos without fear of being unable to return home. Furthermore, for some people, acquiring citizenship in their new home country is an important aspect of their adjustment process, an achievement of which to be proud, and a validation of their inclusion in their new community. Advocacy and lobbying from within the Hmong community resulted in the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 1999, which relaxed the stringent requirements of the U.S. citizenship exam (proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English and knowledge of 100 questions on U.S. history and government) for Hmong men who had served as soldiers in Laos during the Vietnam Conflict and their wives. This was a very important accomplishment which made U.S. citizenship a realistic possibility for many people who otherwise would not have been able to obtain it. However, people who

qualified under this Act still had to answer some questions on U.S. history and government, needed \$250 to apply for citizenship, and had to be able to fill out the applications. Furthermore, many Hmong people did not qualify for citizenship under this act.

The Refugee Well Being Project sought to address the U.S. citizenship issue at both individual and systems levels. Before the undergraduates began working with the Hmong participants, we watched a film in class made by Hmong teenagers in Minnesota whose parents were studying for the U.S. citizenship test entitled *U.S. Citizenship Test: Would You Pass?* The filmmakers interviewed people in their school, at a local shopping mall, and downtown, to see if they could pass the U.S. citizenship test. They also interviewed their own parents. Only one American they spoke with passed, while several of the Hmong adults who were studying for the test did. The Hmong teenagers also asked people if they felt the test was fair – a question that received a wide variety of responses. When the undergraduates watched the film, they were shocked. They had no idea how difficult the test was or that applicants also had to be able to read, write and speak English. The undergraduates asked if they could take the test, and only two of the 27 passed. The students also watched the film *Well-Founded Fear*, which is an inside look at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) process of deciding asylum cases. Students were similarly surprised at the subject and unfair nature of this process. Thus, when students began working with Hmong participants in the learning circles, their consciousness about these issues had already begun to be raised.

Once in the learning circles, our work on the U.S. citizenship issue as a group continued. During cultural exchange time in the learning circles, we often discussed the

unfairness and subjectiveness of the test as well as what might be better processes through which people could obtain U.S. citizenship. Many people felt strongly about these issues and thus discussions were engaging and plans of action were generated. On the individual level, undergraduate students worked hard to obtain and generate study resources. For instance, many students created flashcards of the 100 questions for the Hmong adult they were working with and helped the adult complete their citizenship application and compile the necessary supporting materials. One student obtained a picture book that was designed to help individuals with limited reading ability study for the test, which was shared with the group. Students learned that a local literacy organization had many materials and resources (e.g., study guides, tutoring services) for people studying for the test. However, after numerous frustrating experiences with this organization because of their requirement that all interested adults undergo “assessments” that intimidated the Hmong adults and made them feel bad about themselves, we engaged in systems-level efforts to address the biases and problems with the organization. We also discussed and planned to write letters to the INS regarding the difficulty and fairness of the U.S. citizenship tests, although these letter writing efforts did not materialize by the end of the project.

Ending the Project

The Refugee Well Being Project was designed as a small pilot project. In consideration of this, as well as the nature of undergraduate students’ schedules, the project was conceived of as having a clear ending point. Another purpose of this structure was to try to avoid Hmong participants becoming overly dependent on their advocates – rather the focus was intentionally on the advocates transferring advocacy

skills to the Hmong participants and their families. Thus, after eight months of work with the undergraduates and six months of the Hmong participants and undergraduates working together, the project officially ended. Several plans were made to attempt to lessen the difficulty of an abrupt ending. First, the undergraduates were trained to continually work on transferring their advocacy skills to their families, and this was particularly emphasized during the last month of the project. In addition, the ending date of the project was made clear to all participants from the beginning. As this date approached, undergraduates created separate “termination packets” for their adult and any children with whom they had worked closely. These packets contained pictures, letters, stories, quotes, community resources in areas they had worked on together or might need in the future, suggestions for fun activities in the community, and other creative material. Finally, a graduation ceremony and celebration was planned collaboratively and held at a park. Everyone cooked food and brought their families and friends (including lots of children). Graduation certificates were presented to all Hmong participants and undergraduates (since everyone learned together), undergraduates gave their families the termination packets, and many photos were taken. Some undergraduates and Hmong participants maintained their relationships with each other after the project ended, while others did not. In addition, due to the interest of many Hmong participants and undergraduate students, smaller learning circles have continued to be held twice a week. Although the advocacy component has ended, these groups meet to study and talk and the undergraduates are participating without receiving course credit.

Intervention Participation

Retention of Participants

Of the 28 initial Hmong participants, 27 completed the intervention. One woman left the program after two months. Because it was early on, the first person on the waiting list was invited to join the project and work with the undergraduate student who had been matched with the woman who left. The woman who decided not to complete the intervention was interviewed only once and was not included in the analyses. All of the undergraduate students completed the intervention.

Learning Circle Participation

Undergraduate participants were allowed to miss no more than four of the 42 learning circles held during the six months of the project. Because they were receiving course credit for their participation in the project, this was a requirement for them. For Hmong participants, on the other hand, their attendance at the learning circles was obviously based upon their desire to attend. For this reason, it is important to note that attendance at learning circles was quite high. Of the 42 learning circles, 75% of Hmong participants attended 28 or more. The average number they attended was 32 (range 12-42). Attendance was high, with absences mostly due to serious health issues and pregnancy. For instance, one Hmong participant had emergency open-heart surgery during the second month of the learning circles and several subsequent complications. The undergraduate student who was working with her engaged in important advocacy with the woman's employer, the hospital doctors, nurses, and other staff, the Lansing Housing Commission (the woman's landlord), and the insurance companies involved. In addition, the undergraduate helped the Hmong woman obtain additional medical coverage through Medicaid and disability assistance from the government. She also

worked with the woman's son, particularly in advocacy with his school and the school system to secure a tutor for him because of his numerous school absences. Although, they did eventually study together at the Hmong participant's house, she was never able to return to the learning circles.

In addition, three Hmong participants were pregnant and gave birth during the six-month intervention. According to traditional Hmong culture, women must spend the first month after they give birth at home and are not allowed to leave the house. These women thus missed many learning circles. However, the project was designed to be flexible to allow for accommodations. For instance, the undergraduates who worked with these three women went to the women's homes to study when the women were ready and also focused their efforts on other family members and on advocacy and resource needs during the post-pregnancy month. The women were all eager to return to learning circles as soon as possible; one Hmong woman actually decided to come back before the end of her month at home because she missed the learning circles so much.

Overall Participation

The average number of hours each undergraduate student worked with and on behalf of her family, including learning circle and advocacy time, was 120 hours (SD = 18.38, range 87 to 178). As far as face-to-face contact, Hmong participants spent an average of 71 hours with their undergraduate student (SD = 18.63, range 30 to 116). The time undergraduates spent with the Hmong participants' family members varied greatly, ranging from 4 to 72 hours. The average was 31 hours (SD = 19.74).

Research Design and Measurement Model

To assess the fidelity of the intervention and measure its impact on participants, a comprehensive, multi-method strategy was implemented, which included both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component involved a within-group longitudinal design with four data collection points over a period of nine months. The qualitative component included in-depth qualitative recruitment and post-intervention interviews as well as participant observation. Thus, participants in the intervention were interviewed a total of six times (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Interview Timeline

| Date | Qualitative | Quantitative |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 9/2000-10/2000 | Recruitment interview | |
| 11/2000 | | Pre-interview |
| 2/2001 | | Midpoint interview |
| 5/2001 | Post-interview | Post-interview |
| 8/2001 | | Follow-up interview |

Rationale for Multiple Methods

Methodologically, the combined methods allowed for a thorough exploration of participants' experiences in the intervention, including both processes and outcomes, as well as to examine changes in participants over time. One of the most important methodological considerations was that aspects of this intervention were very individualized, based upon the interests, goals, and needs of each participant. There were some areas of interest and need that were so widespread that it made sense to measure them consistently across all individuals (e.g., English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, access to resources) but others varied for each person and therefore needed to be measured in more individualized and open-ended ways.

It is important to note that although a true experimental design might appear to have been an ideal method to test the efficacy of the intervention, it was not feasible given several constraints. First of all, as opposed to a large, unacquainted population (such as women experiencing domestic violence in the Lansing community), the Hmong community in Lansing is relatively small and members are well aware of events affecting each other. Furthermore, Hmong who live at the public housing developments comprise a smaller and even more closely acquainted community. Therefore, it would not only have been difficult, but also culturally inappropriate to offer some Hmong residents the opportunity to participate in the intervention while excluding others, especially given Hmong culture's collective orientation, which places concern for community well-being above that of individuals. After extensive discussion with an advisory group of Hmong individuals, it was clear that a control group would be culturally problematic and that Hmong residents who were assigned to the experimental group but had relatives in the control group would have been likely to either not participate at all or to share the intervention with their relatives.

Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) note that quasi-experimental designs are often the best designs for certain studies, given resource, practical, and logistical constraints, even if the ability to make causal inferences is weakened. In order to make causal inferences, however, a study must demonstrate that the cause preceded the effect, that the cause covaried with the effect, and that alternative explanations for the causal relationship are implausible (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). These requirements were assessed in the interpretation of the results, and alternative explanations such as

maturation, history, testing, attrition, and fidelity of intervention implementation were considered.

In order to strengthen the capability to make causal inferences with a quasi-experimental design, Shadish, Cook, & Campbell (2002) recommend several design elements to consider, including: comparison groups, measurement improvements, and treatment manipulations. Although, a non-random comparison group is often suggested to strengthen a quasi-experimental design, given the small size of the Hmong community in Lansing and the close relationships among community members, any type of comparison group was not feasible. However, the measurement and treatment elements of the design were areas of the study that could be strengthened.

Rather than a simple pre-post design, this study employed a removed-treatment design, in which participants had a pre-test, mid-intervention test, post-test and then a final measure (follow-up test) after the intervention had ended, which allowed for more thorough examination and elimination of some potential threats to validity. For instance, this design provided opportunities to understand what was happening during the intervention (inclusion of the mid-intervention time point) and after the intervention ended (follow-up time point). Four time points rather than two produce observable patterns of change, which can help eliminate the risk of historical effects, such as unrelated events in the community that might explain a pre-post difference. Also, by removing the treatment before the final interview time point, if certain growth patterns changed after the intervention ended (e.g., a deceleration or reversal of improvement), there could be more certainty that the improvements observed during the intervention were due to the intervention rather than to maturation. The follow-up time point also

allowed for exploration of whether effects persisted over time. In addition, including concrete measures of knowledge and skills, such as English proficiency and citizenship knowledge, were important because these types of measures were unlikely to be affected by participants' potential desires to give increasingly positive responses because of the attention they were receiving.

Furthermore, the multiple time point longitudinal design employed in this study allowed an in-depth understanding of the processes at work in the intervention and an exploration of the mediating effects hypothesized, which cannot be explored in a simple pre-post design. Also, when examining the efficacy of an intervention, it is important to understand individuals' growth trajectories or responses to the intervention, which are obscured in group-comparison designs (Nugent, 1996). As Byrk & Raudenbousch (1992) state, "...research on individual change rarely identifies an explicit model of individual growth" (p. 130). Thus, this study focused on identifying models of individual change over time, using multiple time points, and examining both the patterns of change and predictors of change.

Quantitative Research Design

Over a period of nine months, four quantitative interviews were completed with each participant to measure the impact of the intervention on the six specific hypothesized outcomes: English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, access to resources, community participation, quality of life, and psychological well-being. These interviews occurred at three-month intervals (pre-intervention, midpoint of the intervention, immediately following the conclusion of the project, and three months after the project ended). Of the potential total of 108 interviews (four interviews for each of the 27

Hmong participants), 103 were completed. Five participants did not complete one of the scheduled interviews (one midpoint interview, two post-interviews, two follow-up interviews). The interviews took an average of 91 minutes (range 30-195) and contained the measures described below.

Interview procedure. The quantitative interviews were conducted in Hmong in participants' homes by trained bilingual interviewers who were not a part of the learning circles. The interviews were structured and contained fixed response questions. The interview was constructed in English, and then translated into Hmong by two bilingual individuals (one Hmong man and one Hmong woman) who were not involved with the project. The interview was then back-translated into English by two other bilingual individuals (two Hmong women). However, the Hmong version of the interview was not used by the interviewers. Although the translation/back-translation process helped clarify translation discrepancies, several of the interviewers could not read Hmong well and most felt more comfortable reading the interview in English and translating it in the interview. Thus, the interviewers used an English version of the interview, which they translated into Hmong during each interview.

In order to ensure that the interview questions were worded consistently for each interview, a thorough interviewer training process was implemented. Interviewers received extensive training individually and in a group. First, the interviewers, the co-facilitators, my co-teacher, and I met as a large group to review the entire interview and come to a consensus on the translation of each item, which also provided opportunities for me to clarify the intended meaning of each item. This was actually a very important process because several scales were adapted based on the interviewers' assessments of

applicability and comprehensibility for Hmong participants. For instance, one scale that had been used with Hmong participants by other researchers had several questions that the interviewers agreed would have to be translated in the exact same words in Hmong, so the redundancy was eliminated. Another question that had been translated into Hmong by previous researchers asked how often the respondent had been bothered by nerves, but this had been translated literally as the physical nerves in the human body. Through the group process, these potential problems were discovered and corrected. I also trained the interviewers individually on interviewing techniques, including appropriate probing, clarification, empathy skills, and specific instructions for each scale.

Measures. Both pre-existing scales and measures created specifically for this study were used in the quantitative interviews to assess English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, community participation, access to resources, quality of life, and psychological well-being.

English proficiency was measured using the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which is a standardized measure of English as a Second Language ability, designed to assess English communication, fluency, and listening comprehension for adults at the survival and pre-employment skills level (see Kenyon & Stansfield, 1989). The BEST has been widely used by hundreds of ESL programs throughout the United States and has a high reported internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .91). The BEST was field-tested over a period of six months and items were retained based on their item-total correlations and level of difficulty and discrimination. The BEST has also been demonstrated to have high face validity because its content is designed to simulate real-life language use tasks,

and it has been used in numerous program evaluations to study improvement in English proficiency over time (Kenyon & Stansfield, 1989).

The BEST contains 42 items (25 communication, 9 listening comprehension, 8 fluency). The communication items were based on a 3-point scale (0 = incomprehensible, inappropriate, or no response, 1 = comprehensible but not grammatically accurate, 2 = comprehensible and grammatically accurate). The listening comprehension items were dichotomous (0 = inappropriate gesture or no response, 1 = appropriate gesture indicating comprehension). The fluency items assessed the extent of comprehensible information conveyed, independent of grammatical accuracy (0 = incomprehensible, inappropriate or no response, 1 = minimum-possible, unelaborated response, 2 = shorter, less elaborate response, but showing effort beyond minimum, 3 = elaborate response). The highest possible score for the BEST is 85. It was expected that most Hmong participants would be at levels of English proficiency assessed by the BEST, which was the case. Internal consistencies were not calculated in this study because it was an adaptive test in which some respondents were not asked all of the items (depending upon their score on the first 13 items). Furthermore, this measure has been widely employed to measure the English proficiency of English as a Second Language learners and has been shown to have high reliability and validity.

Hmong residents' subjective evaluations of their English proficiency were also collected (see Appendix B, items A17 – A20). Participants were asked to rate separately how well they could speak, understand, read, and write English on a scale from 0 (“Not at all”) to 3 (“Like a native”). Reliabilities at each time point were good (α ranged from .63 to .84, see Table 2).

Citizenship knowledge was measured by questions from the Immigration and Naturalization Service's list of 100 questions applicants for citizenship need to know to pass the United States' citizenship exam. Ten questions, which reflect the different areas of knowledge required, were selected from the list of 100 (see Appendix B, section G). The same 10 questions were asked at all time points, with internal consistencies ranging from .76 to .92 (see Table 2).

Access to resources was measured by several scales. The first was an adaptation of the *Satisfaction with Resources* scale (Sullivan et al., 1992). Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction on a 7-point scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied with the resources they had in eleven specific life domains (employment, education, income, health, health care, child care, health care for children, children's school situations, overall children's well-being, citizenship status, and housing). Reliabilities were consistent (α ranged from .69 to .72, see Table 2). It should be noted that one of the items in this scale (*How do you feel about where you are living right now?*) had a negative item-total correlation ($r = -.05$) at the post-interview time point. However, this item was retained in the scale because it had reasonable loadings at the other time points ($r = .23$ at pre, .29 at midpoint, and .37 at follow-up) and the internal consistencies were adequate.

Access to resources was also measured by an adapted version of the *Difficulty in Obtaining Resources* scale (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). The original scale included eleven items that measured respondents' perceptions of the difficulty they had or might have in the future obtaining resources. For this study, the scale was expanded to include 14 domains (employment, education, income, government assistance, transportation, health

care, legal issues, child care, health care for children, children's school issues, children's non-school issues, citizenship issues, housing, and material goods and services). Hmong participants were asked to rate, on 4-point scale (1 = Not difficult at all, 4 = Very difficult), how difficult it had been in the last three months to obtain resources they needed in each specific domain. If a particular domain was not currently relevant to their lives or they had not been attempting to access resources in the particular area in the past three months, respondents were asked to rate how difficult they thought it would be to obtain resources in that domain in the future (see Appendix B, section C). For instance, if a respondent had not accessed health care in the last three months, she could still assess how difficult it would be for her to access health care in the future, based upon her current circumstances (e.g., health insurance, ability to locate a doctor). Reliabilities for this scale were good (α ranged from .73 to .86, see Table 2).

Community participation was measured using two participation subscales based on a scale I created for previous research on Hmong participation (Goodkind, 1999). The original five-item scale assessed residents' participation in their housing development community, including attendance at resident council meetings, voting in resident council elections, participation in community center activities, and volunteering in the community. The z-scores of the five items were summed to obtain a total frequency score of participation ($\alpha = .65$). This measure was adapted and expanded, based on qualitative data collected for my master's thesis, to create two subscales: neighborhood participation and political participation.

The *neighborhood participation* scale included four items, which assessed participants' involvement in community center activities (if applicable), helping their

neighbors, planning events or activities in their neighborhood, and donating time or materials for events in their neighborhood (see Appendix B, Section B). These items were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 0 (Never) to 5 (More than four times a week). Reliabilities on this scale were low (α ranged from -.01 to .59, see Table 2). Based upon the lack of internal consistency for this scale, it was determined that it was not usable and was thus dropped from further analyses.

The *political participation* scale included four questions about voting in resident council and regular elections (if applicable) and involvement in other political activities in the broader community (see Appendix B, section B). All items were dichotomous (0 = no, 1 = yes). Unfortunately the variance on this scale was extremely limited; almost all respondents (88%) had a score of 0. Given this lack of variance, the political participation scale was also dropped from further analyses.

Quality of life was measured by the *Satisfaction with Life Areas* scale (Ossorio, 1979), which has been employed in several studies of Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugee groups (e.g., Rumbaut, 1989a, 1991a) and covers the following nine areas of everyday life: work, money, home life, children, neighborhood, social contacts, health, religion, and leisure (see Appendix B, section E). Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied,” with a neutral midpoint. Internal consistencies for this scale were adequate at most time points, with the exception of the post-interview (Cronbach’s α ranged from .42 to .86, see Table 2). The item assessing respondents’ satisfaction with their housing and neighborhood was particularly problematic at the post-interview, with an item-total correlation of -.34. Without this item, the internal consistency of the scale at post-interview would have been

.58. Although the scale was not adjusted based upon the anomalous item at the post-interview, a second version of the quality of life scale was created without this item in order to verify the results obtained in further analyses.

Psychological well being was measured using modified versions of the distress and happiness subscales of Rumbaut's (1985) Psychological Well-Being Scale, which have been used extensively with refugee and immigrant populations, including several studies of Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugee groups (e.g., Rumbaut, 1991a, 1991b, 1989a, 1985; Ying & Akutsu, 1997). Each subscale consisted of items measured on a 4-point Likert scale with possible responses of never, a little, sometimes, and a lot (see Appendix B, section D). In Rumbaut's original scales, items had a six-point response scale, but for this study the response choices were simplified, based upon feedback from the interview translators and interviewers during interview preparation and training.

The *distress* subscale contained six questions that assessed different areas of general distress the participant had experienced in the last month, such as: How often have you felt under strain, stress, and pressure? How often have you felt you had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile? This scale had good internal consistency (Cronbach's α ranged from .64 to .76, see Table 2).

The *happiness* subscale contained six questions about participants' levels of happiness in the last month, such as: How often have you felt happy, satisfied, or pleased with your present life? How often have you felt cheerful and lighthearted? The internal consistency of this scale was mixed, with reliability at the post-interview being particularly problematic (Cronbach's α ranged from .08 to .69, see Table 2). Examination

of the item-total correlations at post-interview did not reveal a particular item that should be removed or a clear solution for adjusting the scale. Given that the internal consistency of the happiness scale at the other interview time points was adequate, subsequent data analyses were conducted without the post-interview happiness scale scores.

Table 2 – Internal Consistencies for Outcome Measures

| Scale | Cronbach's Alpha (Item-Total Correlations) N = 27 | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Time 1 (Pre) | Time 2 (Midpoint) | Time 3 (Post) | Time 4 (Follow-up) |
| Perceived English Proficiency | .84 (.59 - .75) | .79 (.50 - .71) | .75 (.45 - .65) | .63 (.29 - .55) |
| Citizenship Knowledge | .89 (.54 - .84) | .90 (.40 - .82) | .92 (.49 - .91) | .76 (.10 - .76) |
| Satisfaction with Resources | .69 (.10 - .58) | .69 (.08 - .45) | .69 (-.05 - .69) | .72 (.26 - .71) |
| Difficulty Accessing Resources | .79 (.21 - .60) | .79 (.02 - .68) | .73 (.04 - .68) | .86 (.25 - .74) |
| Neighborhood Participation | .35 (-.15 - .50) | .41 (.08 - .45) | -.01 (-.05 - .04) | .59 (-.04 - .57) |
| Quality of Life | .60 (.13 - .42) | .86 (.36 - .75) | .42 (-.34 - .61) | .77 (.30 - .57) |
| Happiness | .69 (.29 - .54) | .57 (.13 - .46) | .08 (-.35 - .27) | .63 (.06 - .56) |
| Distress | .77 (.39 - .70) | .71 (.35 - .52) | .64 (.20 - .54) | .69 (.29 - .72) |

Demographic data, including age, gender, age of immigration, length of time in the United States, children, years of education, and employment status was also collected (see Appendix B, section A).

Process questions were asked at the mid-intervention and post-intervention interviews. At the mid-intervention interview, participants were asked about how the intervention was going (e.g., What do you like best about the Learning Circles? How are

things going overall with your advocate? Are there things that you wish were different or that could be improved?). At the post-interview, participants were asked other questions about the specifics of the intervention (e.g., Were the learning circles too long/too short? Too big/too small? What was most helpful/most difficult about working with your advocate? About the project overall?) (see Appendix B, Section I).

Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative design had three main components: a recruitment interview with each participant, post-interviews with each Hmong participant and her undergraduate, and participant observation.

Recruitment interviews. I conducted the initial recruitment interviews in participants' homes with one of the Hmong co-facilitators interpreting. These initial interviews provided an opportunity to explain the project to participants and to learn about their backgrounds, resettlement experiences and current resources and learning needs. They were also designed to begin to form relationships with the participants by introducing ourselves and our backgrounds and by listening to their flight and resettlement stories and to what their current lives in the United States were like. These interviews were semi-structured, with eight open-ended questions and two checklists about learning and advocacy interests (see Appendix C). The interviews ranged in length from 1 to 2 hours, including discussion about the project and questions to and from the participant.

Paired qualitative interviews. Upon completion of the project, I interviewed each participant and the undergraduate with whom she worked. These interviews were conducted in English and Hmong with one of the Hmong co-facilitators. I asked each

question to both the Hmong participant and undergraduate student, each of whom answered in their own native language. The Hmong co-facilitator translated all of the questions and answers, so that everyone could understand what was being said and could communicate freely with each other. The interviews were conducted in Hmong participants' homes or in one of the community centers where the learning circles were held. They ranged in length from 50 minutes to two hours and were semi-structured with ten open-ended questions (see Appendix D), which explored participants' experiences in intervention (e.g., the most important things each undergraduate and Hmong participant had learned from each other and taught each other, the best and most difficult things about working together, what their expectations of the project were and whether the project had met them, suggestions for improvements, opportunities to add other thoughts or ideas). The interviews were tape-recorded and the English was transcribed.

Participant observation. In order to augment the interview data collected, I recorded field notes throughout the project – after each learning circle, during supervisions with the undergraduate students, and following the qualitative interviews. These notes were used to help explain and understand the quantitative findings (e.g., growth trajectories) and qualitative data, and to document the fidelity of the intervention (e.g., amount of time each undergraduate spent with her family, what each undergraduate and participant accomplished). Field notes were also important in order to record the process of this new intervention.

The fidelity of the intervention was also assessed by data collected from the undergraduate advocates. Each student completed a weekly progress report which included open-ended questions about each week's goals, activities, and accomplishments,

documentation of number of hours advocate engaged in advocacy, learning, and other activities, checklists of issues addressed, documentation of Hmong adults' attendance at the Learning Circles, and several Likert-type items assessing weekly communication and accomplishments (see Appendix E). At the end of the intervention, undergraduates completed a written questionnaire, which assessed the number of hours they worked with their family, the areas of advocacy and learning they worked on, the specific advocacy actions they took, the effectiveness of their efforts, and their own perceptions about the project (see Appendix F). Undergraduates also kept detailed logbooks of each week's activities both in the learning circles and the time spent outside of the learning circles on advocacy.

Data Analyses

Quantitative Analyses

Before beginning the quantitative data analyses, scales for each of the outcomes were created by aggregating the appropriate items, computing and checking the distributions, skewness, kurtosis, reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha), and item-total correlations of each scale, and making any necessary adjustments.

Growth trajectory modeling. Growth trajectory modeling was used to test the hypothesized increases in participants' English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, community participation, access to resources, quality of life, and psychological well-being. This technique provides maximum power in examining change (both linear and non-linear) over time across individuals. With four interview time points and 27 individuals, growth trajectory modeling operates with a total N of 108 non-independent observations, rather than 27.

In addition to increased power, growth trajectory modeling has several advantages over repeated measures analysis of variance, a technique commonly employed in longitudinal analyses. First, growth trajectory modeling accounts for missing data (at any time point) without excluding any individual from analyses (Byrk & Raudenbush, 1992). Thus, it allowed for the inclusion of the five participants who each missed one of their four interviews. Second, growth trajectory modeling provides the capability to flexibly examine change over time in one domain as it relates to change over time in other domains, which allowed for an examination of the mediating effects of increased English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and access to resources on increasing levels of community participation and psychological well-being over time, as hypothesized in research question 7.

A third advantage of growth trajectory modeling is that it allows for an exploration of individual variability by modeling growth trajectories for each person in the data set. For instance, it can be used to answer questions such as: Do people who are older or younger or who have been in the U.S. different lengths of time respond differently to the intervention? However, given the small sample size of 27, this method provided only a limited ability to test moderators that might have influenced the variance across individuals' growth trajectories (e.g., age, gender, years lived in the United States, prior English ability). Finally, growth trajectory modeling is feasible with a minimum of 20 individuals (Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998) and has been successfully used with small samples in a variety of fields (e.g., Abbott, Reed, Abbott & Berninger, 1997; Kivlinghan, Schuetz, & Kardash, 1998; Svartberg, Seltzer, Stiles & Khoo, 1995).

Growth trajectories were modeled separately for each outcome. The first step was to graphically explore the process of change at the individual level for each outcome by examining each individual's growth trajectories by plotting them using the scatter plot function in SPSS. This is important in order to explore whether there are linear and/or nonlinear patterns of change over time and whether individuals followed similar patterns of change over time.

The growth trajectory modeling was conducted using the program HLM (Hierarchical Linear and Nonlinear Modeling) 5.04 for Windows, Student Version (Byrk, Raudenbush, & Congdon, 2001). For each outcome, an initial Level-1 model was constructed based upon examination of the individual trajectory plots. For instance, if the individual trajectory plots indicated linear growth, the initial model included the intercept (β_{00}) and a linear or growth effect (β_{10} , time points = 0, 1, 2, 3). If the individual trajectory plots suggested linear plus deceleration or acceleration, the initial model included the intercept, a linear effect, and a quadratic effect (β_{20} , time point squared = 0, 1, 4, 9). These effects were entered as uncentered, but with pre-intervention time 1 given a value of 0, so that the intercept would be meaningful (pre-intervention level of the outcome). If there was not a clear pattern indicated by the individual trajectory plots, the modeling process began with a model that included intercept, linear, and quadratic effects. Based upon this initial model, the significance of the linear and quadratic effects was examined. If both components were significant, they were kept in the model. However, if the quadratic effect was not significant ($p > .05$), it was removed from the model, and then the remaining model was tested. If, after removing the quadratic effect,

the linear effect was also not significant, it was removed from the model, indicating that the best fitting model was an intercept-only model with no significant change over time.

The second step of the growth trajectory modeling involved examining the Level-2 model to consider the random effects (variance components) for each Level-1 predictor in the model. This step was to address questions about whether all participants followed similar patterns of change over time on the outcomes. There were two parts of this procedure. First, the variance components for the linear and quadratic (if included in the model) effects (τ_{11} and τ_{22}) were examined. If either was significant, it most likely indicated that there were significant differences in the patterns of change experienced by the participants and should remain in the model. However, if these components were not significant ($p > .05$), it suggested that participants followed similar patterns of change over time on the particular outcome being tested (no significant variability across individuals) and therefore the non-significant variance components should be removed from the model. By removing these components from the model, they are no longer random effects but are fixed and not allowed to vary. However, before making a final determination about whether to estimate or fix the random linear and quadratic (if applicable) effects, models with all possible combinations of fixed and random level-1 effects were run and compared using likelihood-ratio chi square tests. This is a more accurate test of the best fitting model because it uses the deviance statistic of each model, which is a statistic that indicates how well the particular model specified fits the actual data (the lower the deviance, the better fitting the model), to compare whether the extra degrees of freedom required for each random effect improve the model enough to make it worth estimating the larger model. It is important to note that this procedure could also

apply to the variance component of the intercept effect (τ_{00}), if there might be reason to believe that participants might all have similar initial (pre-intervention) scores on a particular outcome.

A final step was involved in the Level-2 modeling for citizenship knowledge. The other outcomes (English proficiency, community participation, access to resources, quality of life, and psychological well-being) were applicable to all participants. However, citizenship knowledge was individualized, in that some participants were interested in studying for the U.S. citizenship test, while others did not share this goal. Therefore, after determining the best-fitting model for citizenship knowledge, an additional model was tested, in which a dichotomous variable indicating whether participants were studying for the U.S. citizenship test was added to the Level-2 model.

Power analysis. In order to make sure these analyses were feasible, a power analysis was completed to estimate the probability of finding a treatment effect of the intervention (change over time) using an effect size of .1145 (a variance of means of .052, a standard deviation at each level of .870, and a between level correlation of .400), which represents the increase in average score of quality of life over time for participants in this study. Based upon these estimates, power was calculated for a sample size of 27 and a single-group repeated measures analysis of variance¹¹ with a .050 significance level, using NQuery software (Elashoff, 1995). The power analysis indicated an 83% power to detect a difference in means across the four levels of the repeated measures. For the remaining dependent variables (English proficiency, citizenship knowledge,

¹¹ This would be equivalent to HLM assuming no missing data; with the small amount of missing data in this study, the power would be slightly lower than that estimated here.

satisfaction with resources, and distress), power exceeded 90%. Therefore, the power of the growth trajectory modeling appears to be adequate.

Testing mediating effects. Baron and Kenny (1986) outline four requirements which must be met in order to establish the existence of a mediating relationship: 1) the predictor (intervention) must be significantly related to the outcome, 2) the predictor must be significantly related to the proposed mediating variable, 3) the proposed mediating variable must be significantly related to the outcome, and 4) when the proposed mediating variable is included in a model with the predictor and the outcome, the relationship between the predictor and outcome must decrease. To test the hypothesized mediating relationships in this study (increased English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and access to resources would mediate increases in psychological well-being, quality of life, and community participation over time), a series of analyses were conducted to determine whether Baron and Kenny's four criteria were met.

Criterion 1. The relationships between the intervention and the outcomes were tested in the initial growth trajectory models discussed previously. It is important to note that this method of assessing significant relationships between an intervention and outcomes was based on testing the growth trajectories of the outcomes over time to determine which were significant. Thus, conclusions from these analyses are more tentative than they would be if there were a true experimental design with a control group, which could more definitely rule out other uncertainties such as maturation or historical effects. The implications of this method are noted here but will be discussed in more detail when the results are presented.

Criterion 2. The relationships between the intervention and the proposed mediating variables were also tested in the initial growth trajectory models because each of the proposed mediating variables was also examined as an outcome.

Criterion 3. In order to determine whether the proposed mediators were significantly related to the outcomes, a series of analyses were required. First, correlations among the potential mediating variables (English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, satisfaction with resources) and the potential outcomes (quality of life and distress) were examined at each interview time point. This provided initial evidence of possible significant relationships between the proposed mediators and the outcomes.

However, to completely examine the third requirement that the potential mediators be significantly related to the outcomes, further analyses were necessary. If correlations among the variables indicated that there were significant relationships, it was important to demonstrate that these relationships were not due only to pre-existing relationships among the variables pre-intervention. Thus, a model for each outcome was created, in which linear change (time point), quadratic change (time point squared), and the proposed mediator as a time-varying covariate were entered at Level 1. This first model basically tested the overall within-time effect (significance) of the mediator on the outcome, without regard to the timing of the intervention.

Next, it was necessary to further separate the effects of the proposed mediator to determine if they were related to the intervention or based solely upon a pre-existing relationship between the outcome and predictor. A second model, in which the linear and quadratic change components were included in Level 1 and participants' initial scores on the proposed mediating variable at the pre-interview was included at Level 2, was created

to determine if the pre-intervention levels of the proposed mediator affected the trajectory of the outcome over time. This was an alternative to the first model because it tested whether it was possible to predict the outcome trajectory over time based only on the pre-intervention levels of the proposed mediator, instead of the time-varying covariate of the proposed mediator. If the pre-intervention levels of the proposed mediating variable were equally good at accounting for changes in the outcome, this would suggest that the outcome might be a function of the pre-existing values of the proposed mediator, irrespective of intervention effects. This would suggest that a mediating relationship was not present.

Criterion 4. In order to test the final requirement that the relationship between the intervention and outcome decrease when the proposed mediator is added to the model, a final model was created for each outcome. As with the first two models, the linear and quadratic change components were entered at Level 1. However, instead of entering the proposed mediator as a time-varying covariate at Level 1 as was done in the first model, a clearer separation of pre-intervention and intervention effects was achieved by entering the scores on the proposed mediating variable at time points 2-4 (mid, post, and follow-up) deviated from the scores of the proposed mediating variable at time point 1 (pre) as a time-varying covariate. This resulted in the covariate reflecting within-person change (controlling for the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator), rather than having a covariate that combined within-person change and absolute score level. Raw scores of the proposed mediator at pre were entered in the model at Level 2. This combined model was the final test of a mediating relationship. If the within-person change on the proposed mediating variable was significant as a time-varying covariate, this indicated

be determined if the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator is significantly different from the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator. This was done by comparing the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator to the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator. If the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator is significantly different from the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator, then the proposed mediator is significantly different from the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator. If the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator is not significantly different from the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator, then the proposed mediator is not significantly different from the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator.

Criterion 4. In order to determine if the relationship between the intervention and outcome is mediated by the proposed mediator, a final model was created for each outcome. First, with the first two models, the linear and quadratic change components were entered at Level 1. However, instead of entering the proposed mediator as a time-varying covariate (Level 2) as was done in the first model, a cleaner separation of pre-intervention and intervention effects was achieved by entering the scores on the proposed mediating variable at time points 1-4 (mid, post, and follow-up) divided from the scores of the proposed mediating variable at time point 1 (pre) as a time-varying covariate. This resulted in the covariate reflecting within-person change (controlling for the pre-intervention level of the proposed mediator), rather than having a covariate that combined within-person change and absolute score level. Raw scores of the proposed mediator at pre were entered in the model at Level 2. This combined model was the final test of a mediating relationship. If the within-person change on the proposed mediating variable was significant as a time-varying covariate, this indicated

that within-person change on the proposed mediator was related to change in the outcome, controlling for the correlation between these variables pre-intervention. Furthermore, if the linear and quadratic effects for time were no longer significant, this suggested that changes in the proposed mediating variable might completely mediate the intervention effects on the outcome over time.

Qualitative Analyses

In order to analyze the qualitative data, the paired qualitative interview tape recordings were transcribed by a paid transcriber. I verified the accuracy of all transcriptions by checking them against the tapes, which was particularly important given the multiple speakers and languages within each interview. The recruitment interviews, field notes, and supervision notes were already in written form. For the purposes of this study, the qualitative analyses required were primarily descriptive, rather than within-case or cross-case analyses. Thus, I completed a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The first step in this analysis was to create a comprehensive list of themes by reviewing all of the data. Some codes were predetermined by the quantitative outcomes while others emerged from the data during the analyses. Next, themes were grouped into meta-themes. A second person reviewed the list of themes, meta-themes, and the coding of verbatim.

RESULTS

Descriptives

It was hypothesized that Hmong participants would experience increases in English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, access to resources, community participation, quality of life, and psychological well-being over time during and after their involvement in the intervention. It was further hypothesized that increases in community participation, quality of life, and psychological well-being would be mediated by increases in English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and access to resources. Before examining these hypotheses, it is important to look descriptively at the participants and how they were doing before they began the intervention. Table 3 contains the means, standard deviations, and ranges for all outcomes at each interview time point.

Table 3 – Descriptive Statistics for Outcomes

| Outcome Scales | Mean (Standard Deviation) Range | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Pre | Midpoint | Post | Follow-up |
| | | | | |
| English Proficiency | 38.96 (23.07) 0 – 73 | 44.12 (22.89) 0 – 79 | 45.00 (23.95) 0 – 78 | 54.19 (22.61) 0 – 80 |
| Perceived English Proficiency | .55 (.44) 0 – 2 | .57 (.44) 0 – 1.75 | .66 (.35) 0 – 1 | .72 (.36) 0 – 1.25 |
| Citizenship Knowledge | .43 (1.16) 0 – 5 | 2.79 (3.17) 0 – 8 | 3.10 (3.31) 0 – 9 | 3.05 (2.42) 0 – 7 |
| Satisfaction with Resources | 3.18 (.84) 1.44 – 4.40 | 3.55 (.84) 2.22 – 5.20 | 4.08 (.86) 1.40 – 5.38 | 3.22 (.94) 1.70 – 4.78 |
| Difficulty Accessing Resources | 2.91 (.59) 1.70 – 4.00 | 3.02 (.61) 1.50 – 3.86 | 2.84 (.50) 1.64 – 3.70 | 3.10 (.52) 2.14 – 3.86 |
| Quality of Life | 3.62 (.73) 1.78 – 4.78 | 3.83 (.99) 2.22 – 5.67 | 4.25 (.53) 3.00 – 5.11 | 3.93 (.82) 2.56 – 5.56 |
| Psychological Well-Being – Distress | 1.92 (.68) .33 – 3.00 | 1.36 (.75) .33 – 2.83 | 1.29 (.53) .33 – 2.33 | 1.66 (.64) .33 – 3.00 |
| Psychological Well-Being – Happiness | 1.57 (.61) .50 – 2.83 | 1.50 (.56) .33 – 2.50 | 1.55 (.30) 1.00 – 2.00 | 1.76 (.45) .67 – 2.67 |

English Proficiency

All Hmong participants had low levels of English proficiency prior to the intervention. The Basic English Skills Test, which was used to assess participants' English proficiency, is designed for individuals with minimal or basic English proficiency. The highest score possible on the BEST is 82; the highest score among the Hmong participants pre-intervention was 73. The average BEST score pre-intervention

was 39 (see Table 3) and the median score was 38. According to the levels described below in Table 4, almost half of the participants (13 of 27) could function at best in a very limited way in situations related to their immediate needs. At the final interview three months after the intervention had ended, only 3 of the 27 participants remained at these very limited levels. The number of participants who could satisfy at least most of their survival needs in English increased from 7 to 14.

Table 4 – Description of English Proficiency Based on BEST Scores

| Level | Description | BEST Scores | Pre ^a | Follow-Up ^b |
|-------|---|-------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 0 | No English ability whatsoever. | 0-8 | 2 | 2 |
| I | Functions minimally, if at all, in English; communicates only through gestures. | 9-15 | 3 | 0 |
| II | Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs; uses only very simple learned phrases. | 16-28 | 8 | 1 |
| III | Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs; only the most basic oral communication abilities. | 29-41 | 1 | 6 |
| IV | Can satisfy basic survival needs and a few very routine social demands; some simple oral communication abilities. | 42-50 | 1 | 0 |
| V | Can satisfy basic survival needs and some limited social demands; can follow simple oral and very basic written instructions. | 51-57 | 5 | 3 |
| VI | Can satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands; can follow simple oral and written instructions and diagrams. | 58-64 | 2 | 3 |
| VII | Can satisfy survival needs and routine work and social demands; can follow oral and simple written instructions in familiar and some unfamiliar situations. | 65+ | 5 | 11 |

^aNumber of participants at pre-intervention interview who scored at each level of English proficiency.

^bNumber of participants at follow-up interview (3 months after end of intervention) who scored at each level of English proficiency.

Participants' perceived English proficiency was consistent with their BEST scores; most participants felt that they could not speak, understand, read, or write English very well. The average perceived English proficiency pre-intervention was low (.55 on a scale ranging from 0 = "not at all" to 3 = "like a native"). In fact, prior to the intervention, there were no participants who endorsed "like a native" to describe their ability to speak, understand, read, or write English, and only one person believed they could speak, understand, read, and write English "well." All other participants' assessed their ability to engage in each type of English proficiency as "not at all" or "with some difficulty."

At the follow-up interview, all of the participants except one continued to assess their English proficiency as "not at all" or "with some difficulty," but more of them endorsed the latter category. For example, eight participants said they could speak English "not at all" at pre-intervention, but only six participants endorsed this response during the follow-up interview. Participants who believed they could understand English "not at all" decreased from eight to five, participants who said they could read English "not at all" decreased from 19 to 10, and participants who said they could write English "not at all" decreased from 18 to 11.

Citizenship Knowledge

Among participants began the intervention with very limited knowledge of United States history and government that is required for the U.S. citizenship exam.¹² The mean score pre-intervention was .43 (with possible scores ranging from 0 to 10); 77.3% of

¹² Six participants were already U.S. citizens, prior to their participation in the intervention. These individuals were not asked the citizenship knowledge questions for several reasons. First, these questions were not relevant to them because becoming a U.S. citizen was not one of their goals during their

participants had a score of 0 (indicating they could not answer any questions correctly). This was expected, given that learning this information and becoming a U.S. citizen were explicit goals of many participants. At the final interview, only 18.5% of participants had a score of 0 (did not know any of the U.S. citizenship questions), and the mean score was 3.05.¹³

Community Participation

Hmong participants were highly involved with the Hmong community before, during, and after their participation in the intervention; all identified Hmong community organizations, churches, or clan leadership groups with which they were involved. However, within the broader community, none of the 48% who lived in public housing had attended resident council meetings or participated in resident council elections. Among public housing residents, 69% had not been in their community centers, which were located within several hundred feet of their homes, at all in the last three months. Two participants had helped clean up around their neighborhoods but the only other community involvement noted by participants was the five who said they helped take care of neighbor or family members' children. Of the six U.S. citizens, none had voted in an election. At the follow-up interview, these numbers did not change substantially. Four public housing residents had voted in a resident council election, but the percent of public housing residents who had not been in their community centers in the last three

participation in the intervention. Furthermore, it seemed inappropriate and disrespectful to ask them these questions after they had already proven their competency in this area by passing the U.S. citizenship exam.¹³ Although the U.S. citizenship exam is not uniform, applicants are typically asked 10 questions from the possible 100 on the study guide. Applicants must answer at least 7 of the 10 questions correctly to pass the test. They must also demonstrate that they can speak, read, and write English.

months remained high (65%).¹⁴ Three participants had helped clean up their neighborhoods.

Access to Resources

Participants' access to resources was assessed in multiple ways, including their satisfaction with resources, their difficulty accessing resources, and their actual resources in different areas. Pre-intervention, 56% of participants were employed and 67% of those employed had some fringe benefits. Many participants (30%) were dissatisfied with their employment situation and 48% had mixed feelings about it. Only 22% were satisfied with their employment situation. Given that all participants were employed in low-paying, entry-level jobs, it is not surprising that 70% were receiving some form of government assistance. Thirty-seven percent of participants had experienced a cut or loss of their government benefits in the last three months, and 52% said that money issues had been "very difficult" in the last three months.

The majority of participants (81%) were dissatisfied with their educational level, which is not unexpected since 81% had no previous education and none had completed high school in the United States (one woman finished high school in Laos). Most participants (59%) were satisfied with where they were currently living (26% were dissatisfied and 15% had mixed feelings), but 26% did not have regular access to a car or other means of transportation. Three people had legal issues for which they needed attorneys, and two of them had been able to access an attorney.

All participants with children said that they took care of their children themselves and did not have other childcare. The typical situation for many families was for parents

¹⁴ However, during the intervention, participants were in their community centers twice a week because the learning circles were held there. Their presence at the community centers gave them greater contact with

to work different shifts in order to ensure that there was always someone available to take care of the children. Some participants relied on their parents or other family members to help with childcare. Fifty-two percent of those participants with children anticipated that it would be “very difficult” to deal with both school and non-school issues for their children in the future.

Sixty-seven percent of participants had needed medical care in the three months prior to the start of the intervention, but only 37% of participants actually received medical care during that time. Of participants who had children, 35% needed medical care for at least one of their children in the last three months, but only 26% received it. These discrepancies were not due entirely to a lack of health insurance: 93% of participants had health insurance for themselves, 87% of those with children had health insurance for all of their children, and the remaining 13% had health insurance for at least some of their children.

At the follow-up interview (three months after the intervention had ended), 65% of participants were employed and 71% of those employed had some fringe benefits. However, more participants were dissatisfied with their jobs (54%), with 15% having mixed feelings and 31% being satisfied. Fewer families (62%) were receiving government assistance, and 22% had benefits cut or lost in past three months. There was a large decrease (from 52% to 30%) in the number of participants who said money issues had been “very difficult” in the past three months.

Most participants (76%) remained dissatisfied with their educational level. Fewer participants were satisfied (50%) and dissatisfied (8%) with where they were currently living; many (42%) had mixed feelings. The same 26% of participants did not have

housing development staff and other residents and made them a more visible part of the community.

regular access to a car or other means of transportation. None of the participants had needed an attorney in the past three months.

At the follow-up interview, two participants (as opposed to none) said that they had access to childcare. Only 35% of those participants with children anticipated that it would be “very difficult” to deal with school issues in the future, although 50% endorsed this statement for non-school issues for their children. Fewer participants (31%) had needed medical care in the three months between the end of the intervention and the follow-up interview, but it is important to note that all of them who needed it actually received medical care during that time. Of participants who had children, 21% needed medical care for at least one of their children in the last three months, and all but one received it. Access to health insurance also increased: 96% of participants had health insurance for themselves, 92% of those with children had health insurance for all of their children. Of the remaining 8%, 4% had health insurance for at least some of their children and 4% did not have health insurance for any of their children.

Quality of Life

Participants had a mean life satisfaction score of 3.61 pre-intervention. Based on a 7-point scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 6 (very satisfied), this mean falls approximately halfway between the neutral midpoint and “somewhat satisfied.” This mean is lower than those found in the Indochinese Health and Adaptation Research Project longitudinal study of 500 adult Southeast Asian refugees, in which the average life satisfaction scores in 1983 and 1984 were 4.18 and 4.38, respectively (Rumbaut, 1989a). However, the mean is somewhat comparable to that of the 109 Hmong adults interviewed in the same study, whose average life satisfaction decreased from 5.05 in

1975 to 3.83 in 1985. Rumbaut (1989a) found that among all of the Southeast Asian refugee groups, the Hmong participants were the least satisfied with their lives and were the only group whose life satisfaction decreased over time. In this study, participants' average life satisfaction increased over time during the intervention and remained above its initial level at the follow-up interview (see Table 3).

Psychological Well-Being

Hmong participants were more distressed than happy. Pre-intervention, their mean level of distress was 1.92, based on a scale from 0 to 3, with 0 indicating that participants never experienced various distress symptoms in the last month and 3 indicating that participants experienced the particular symptom "a lot." This mean score reveals quite high levels of distress among participants. Thirty-seven percent had felt sad, discouraged, hopeless or that they had so many problems they wondered if anything were worthwhile "a lot" in the past month, 41% felt under strain, stress or pressure "a lot" in the past month, and 44% had felt down-hearted and blue "a lot" in the past month. At the follow-up interview, participants' mean level of distress was 1.66. The percentage of participants who had felt sad, discouraged, hopeless, or that they had so many problems they wondered if anything were worthwhile "a lot" in the past month was lower but remained high (31%). The percentage of participants who felt under strain, stress or pressure "a lot" in the past month dropped to 19%, and the percentage of participants who had felt down-hearted and blue "a lot" in the past month decreased even more substantially to 8%.

Participants' mean happiness score pre-intervention was 1.57, which is approximately at the midpoint of the happiness scale. At the follow-up interview,

participants' average happiness score was somewhat higher (1.76). About half (48%) of participants felt happy, satisfied or pleased with their present life "sometimes" or "a lot" at the pre-intervention. This increased to over three-quarters of participants (77%) at the follow-up interview. About the same percentages of participants felt their daily lives were full of things that were interesting to them "sometimes" or "a lot" at the pre-intervention (59%) and follow-up interviews (65%). This was also true for the number of participants who felt cheerful and lighthearted "sometimes" or "a lot in past month – 69% pre-intervention and 62% at the follow-up interview.

In sum, the Hmong participants in this study were surviving in the United States, but struggling. They had low levels of English proficiency and minimal education. Although most were employed, their salaries were low and thus they had high levels of reliance on government assistance. Participants also had difficulty accessing the resources they needed in multiple areas of their lives. In addition, they had high levels of distress and low levels of life satisfaction and happiness. Following their involvement in the intervention, participants' lives seemed to improve in many ways, but to accurately assess changes in participants' lives over time during and after the intervention, the study hypotheses were tested using growth trajectory modeling.

Hypothesis 1a – English Proficiency

It was hypothesized that Hmong participants' English proficiency would increase during and after the intervention. The growth trajectory and growth trajectory coefficients for English proficiency (see Tables 5 & 6 and Figure 1) indicate that this hypothesis was confirmed. The growth trajectory is linear and shows an increase in

English proficiency throughout the intervention and beyond.¹⁵ The solid line represents the estimated growth trajectory based on the growth trajectory model coefficients. The X's, which are the actual observed means at each interview time point, indicate that the growth trajectory model is a good approximation of the real data. There are small differences between the estimated growth trajectory and the observed means for two reasons. First, the observed means are calculated within time at each time point rather than across time, while the growth trajectory model is estimated based upon all four time points for each person in order to obtain the overall mean trajectory. Second, missing means¹⁶ are estimated by the model rather than dropped.

The coefficients of the growth trajectory model provide detailed information on participants' trajectories, including their initial levels of English proficiency and changes in their English proficiency over time. β_{00} is comparable to the intercept in a regression model. This growth trajectory model is constructed so that β_{00} represents the mean English proficiency level at time 1 (pre-interview), which was 38.65 (about midpoint on the Basic English Skills Test). The significance of this term indicates that the average pre-intervention English proficiency level of Hmong participants was significantly different from zero. The significant random effect (τ_{00}) of the intercept indicates that there was significant variability across individuals on their initial level of English proficiency.

The mean growth rate (β_{10}) is the linear coefficient, which is comparable to an unstandardized beta weight in regression, and indicates the change in English proficiency

¹⁵ Examination of the individual growth trajectories for English proficiency indicated that individuals' growth patterns were linear. Thus, an acceleration or deceleration effect was not tested in this model.

between each time point. The coefficient of 4.85 indicates that participants' English proficiency increased approximately 5 points during each 3-month time period (between interviews), for a total increase of 14.55 points. This increase in English proficiency is both statistically significant and practically significant, as demonstrated in Table 3, which details the levels of survival and social functioning in English and participants' improvements over time. The random effect of the growth rate or linear change coefficient (τ_{10}) was not significant, which suggested that there were no significant differences in individuals' growth patterns. In other words, individuals experienced similar increases in English proficiency over time. This was confirmed by conducting a likelihood-ratio chi square test, which revealed that there was not a significant decrement in fit in the simpler model with the fixed growth rate coefficient.

Table 5
Likelihood Ratio Test for Best Growth Trajectory Model of English Proficiency¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| <i>1 Intercept & Growth²</i> | 794.59 | 4 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model 2:</i> | | | | | |
| 2 Intercept & Growth (fixed) | 795.08 | 2 | 0.49 | 2 | n.s.³ |

¹Best model is indicated in bold.

²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

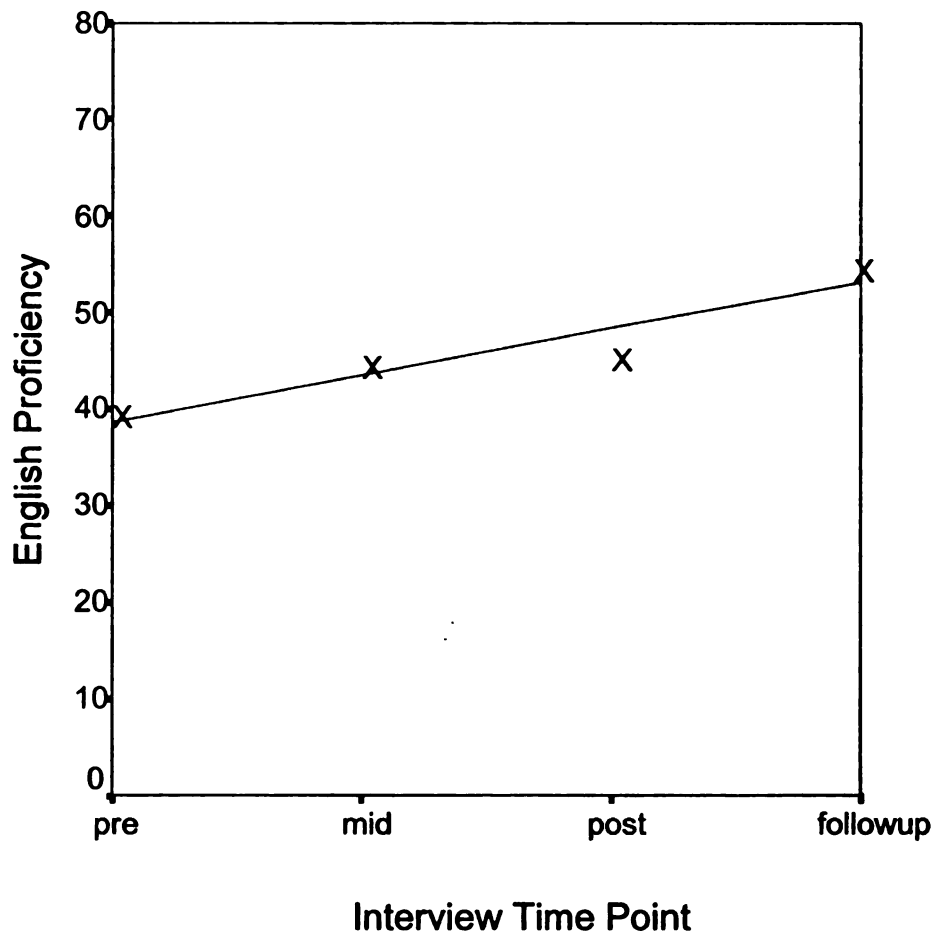
³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

¹⁶ Of the possible 108 interviews (27 participants interviewed at four time points), five interviews were not completed (two midpoint, two post, and one follow-up interview). Means for these five interviews were missing.

Table 6
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of English Proficiency

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean English proficiency pre-intervention, β_{00} | 38.65 | 4.36 | 8.86 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate, β_{10} | 4.85 | 0.67 | 7.24 | .000 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention English proficiency, τ_{00} | 471.46 | 26 | 835.01 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{it} | 58.55 | | | |
| Deviance = 795.08 with 2 df | | | | |

Figure 1 – Growth Trajectory for English Proficiency



Hypothesis 1b – Perceived English Proficiency

Participants' perceived English proficiency followed a similar pattern of change to that of English proficiency – significantly increasing over time during and after the intervention (see Tables 7 & 8 and Figure 2). However, the likelihood-ratio chi square test revealed that the best fitting model was with growth as a random effect, indicating that the growth pattern was not consistent across all individuals. Furthermore, although the increase in perceived English proficiency over time was significant, it was relatively small.

Table 7
Likelihood Ratio Test for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Perceived English Proficiency¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----|---------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| 1 Intercept & Growth² | 69.74 | 4 | — | — | — |
| <i>Compared to Model 2:</i> | | | | | |
| 2 Intercept & Growth (fixed) | 76.05 | 2 | 6.31 | 2 | <.05 |

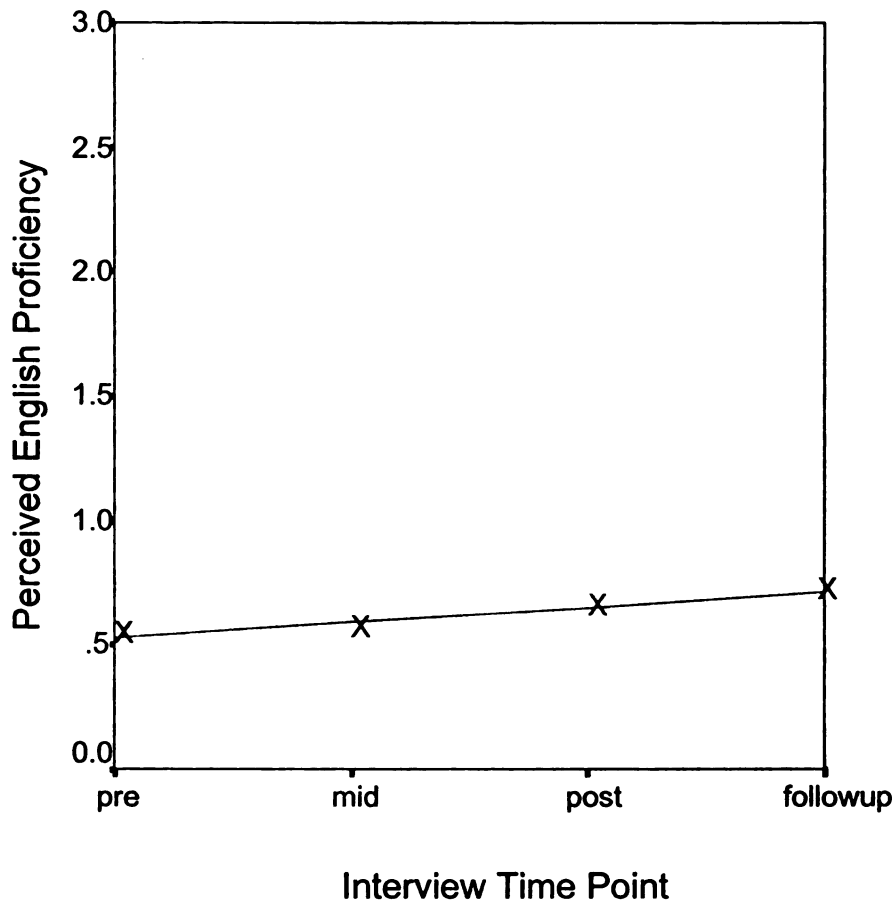
¹Best model is indicated in bold.

²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

Table 8
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Perceived English Proficiency (PEP)

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean PEP pre-intervention, β_{00} | 0.53 | .09 | 6.20 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate, β_{10} | 0.06 | .03 | 2.29 | .030 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention PEP, τ_{00} | 0.16 | 26 | 118.80 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | 0.01 | 26 | 43.04 | .019 |
| Level-1 error, e_{it} | 0.06 | | | |
| Deviance = 69.74 with 2 df | | | | |

Figure 2 – Growth Trajectory for Perceived English Proficiency



The significant increases in English proficiency and perceived English proficiency over time are validated by participants' own descriptions of their improvements in English proficiency. Selected quotes from the interviews of Hmong participants and their undergraduate partners at the end of the intervention demonstrate that many participants identified improved English proficiency as a very important outcome of their involvement in the project. Participants stated that they learned English both in the formal learning circle setting (one-on-one learning and discussions) and by

having opportunities to talk and interact with a native English speaker (their undergraduate advocate):¹⁷

I feel that before I started this class, I feel like I only know like five percent, maybe five percent, of the English, but then now that I went through and studied all the English, I think I know, I'm kind of embarrassed, but like maybe thirty-five, around there...(#10502, p.10)

But I know that in the past six months, I've been understanding more and I could speak more English and understand more. And when I could read the words and I don't understand what it is, I could understand after Jennifer¹⁸ [undergraduate] explained it to me. So now I'm understanding more English than before. (#10802, pp.2-3)

And actually for the past six months I have learned a lot from this class. She [undergraduate] taught me a lot of stuff, and I did really get it, and I'm very, very happy to understand more English and speak more and know more of the English language that she has taught me. (#40802, p.1)

But the best thing for me is being able to come to class, having the opportunity to learn, and then have friends like Lucy [undergraduate] to talk to me in English constantly, and then that made me kind of remember the words better. And then be able to practice the word. And then, the more you practice, the better that you be able to say it. So, if I just stay home, then I think that I would not be able to learn or to actually speak the language. But I think that, by talking to Lucy, I am actually getting better. (#41101, p.5)

I learn more English than I ever have before, ever since we came to this class. I feel that without you [undergraduate and project] here to help me out, then I probably wouldn't be able to learn as much as I did. (#41401, p.2)

Hypothesis 2 – Citizenship Knowledge

The hypothesis that participants' citizenship knowledge would increase over time during and following their involvement in the intervention was partially confirmed. The growth trajectory model for citizenship knowledge revealed that citizenship knowledge

¹⁷ The quotes presented are English translations of Hmong participants' responses, as translated verbatim by the trained translators during the interviews. The grammar in the quotes is reflective of the translations (English was not the first language of either of the two translators), rather than being representative of the grammar of Hmong participants, who were speaking Hmong during the interviews.

¹⁸ All names of Hmong and undergraduate participants have been changed to protect their confidentiality. Quotes are identified by the id number of the participant and the page number of the interview transcript on which they appear.

increased significantly throughout the intervention, but decreased slightly after the intervention ended (remaining higher than its initial level). Furthermore, although the overall effect of increased citizenship knowledge was significant, individuals did not follow consistent patterns of change. Tables 9 & 10 and Figure 2 detail these findings.

The fixed and random effects for the intercept (participants' mean citizenship knowledge pre-intervention) indicate that their initial citizenship knowledge was not significantly different from zero and that this was consistent for all participants. The mean growth rate or linear change coefficient was 2.44, indicating that participants' citizenship knowledge increased by approximately 2½ points during each 3-month time period, for a total increase of 7.32 points. This increase was statistically significant. However, the mean deceleration or non-linear change coefficient indicated that the increases in citizenship knowledge were somewhat attenuated in that they began to slow down and reverse direction. For the total 9-month time period between the pre- and follow-up interviews, the 7.32 point increase in citizenship knowledge was attenuated by 4.36 points, which indicates a net gain of approximately 3 points. This attenuation was also significant. By examining the growth trajectory, it is evident that participants' citizenship knowledge increased throughout the intervention and then decreased somewhat after the intervention ended.

In practical terms, these scores indicate that participants were learning important information required to pass the U.S. citizenship test, although they began to forget a small amount of this knowledge after the intervention ended. In terms of the entire test (10 questions were chosen for the citizenship knowledge measure from throughout the 100 questions on the test), the growth trajectory could be extrapolated to suggest that

participants may have been learned approximately 73 questions throughout the intervention but forgot about 44 questions after they stopped studying.

The significant random effects for growth and deceleration suggested that participants did not follow similar growth trajectories or patterns of change on citizenship knowledge. This was confirmed by the likelihood-ratio chi square tests, which revealed that the best-fitting model was one in which the intercept effect was fixed but the growth and deceleration effects remained random. Given the significant variability in the growth trajectories of participants and the fact that studying for the U.S. citizenship test was not a goal for all participants, an additional model for citizenship knowledge was created and tested in which a moderator was added. In this model, a dichotomous variable indicating whether participants had studied for the U.S. citizenship test during the intervention (0 = did not study for U.S. citizenship test during intervention, 1 = did study for U.S. citizenship test)¹⁹ was entered at Level-2 to model the variability in the growth and deceleration effects. The moderator model is presented in Table 11. It has two additional fixed effects (β_{11} and β_{21}), which are interaction effects that represent the effect of whether participants were studying for the U.S. citizenship test on the growth and deceleration effects, respectively. In other words, these effects test the question of whether the growth trajectory of citizenship knowledge depends upon whether particular individuals were studying for the U.S. citizenship test. The coefficients in this model confirm that individuals' growth trajectories of citizenship knowledge do depend on whether they were studying for the U.S. citizenship test. In this new model, the main growth and deceleration effects (β_{10} and β_{20}) are no longer significant. Instead, the

¹⁹ Of the 21 participants who were not U.S. citizens, 11 were studying for the U.S. citizenship test during the intervention and 10 were not.

interaction effects (β_{11} and β_{21}) are significant and larger than the main effects in the previous model. The growth rate interaction effect reveals that participants who were studying for the U.S. citizenship test during the intervention had an average of a more than 4-point increase in their citizenship knowledge for each 3-month period (12.93 points total). However, this growth was moderated by a deceleration of approximately 9½ points (the deceleration interaction effect) from pre- to follow-up, which means that the net gain in citizenship knowledge for participants who were studying for the U.S. citizenship test was almost 3½ points. Although the random effects for the growth and deceleration terms decreased, they remained significant, which suggests that there was further unexplained variance in participants' growth trajectories for citizenship knowledge. This model demonstrates even larger increases in citizenship knowledge over time for participants who were studying for the U.S. citizenship test than was evident in the model without the moderator.

Table 9
Likelihood Ratio Tests for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Citizenship Knowledge¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| 1 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration ² | 315.53 | 7 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model 1:</i> | | | | | |
| 2 Intercept (fixed), Growth, Deceleration | 316.23 | 4 | 0.70 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| 3 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration | 349.33 | 4 | 33.80 | 3 | <.01 |
| 4 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration (fixed) | 341.94 | 4 | 26.41 | 3 | <.01 |
| <i>Compared to Model 2:</i> | | | | | |
| 5 Intercept (fixed), Growth (fixed), Deceleration | 368.94 | 2 | 52.71 | 2 | <.01 |
| 6 Intercept (fixed), Growth, Deceleration (fixed) | 351.62 | 2 | 35.39 | 2 | <.01 |
| 7 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration (fixed) | 352.98 | 2 | 36.75 | 2 | <.01 |

¹Best model is indicated in **bold**.

²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

Table 10
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Citizenship Knowledge (CK)

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>P value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean CK pre-intervention, β_{00} | 0.49 | 0.27 | 1.84 | .065 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | 2.44 | 0.88 | 2.78 | .012 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | -0.54 | 0.25 | -2.17 | .042 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention CK, τ_{00} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | 12.04 | 20 | 131.42 | .000 |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | 0.86 | 20 | 75.11 | .000 |
| Level-1 error, e_{ii} | 1.56 | | | |
| Deviance = 316.23 with 4 df | | | | |

Figure 3 – Growth Trajectory for Citizenship Knowledge

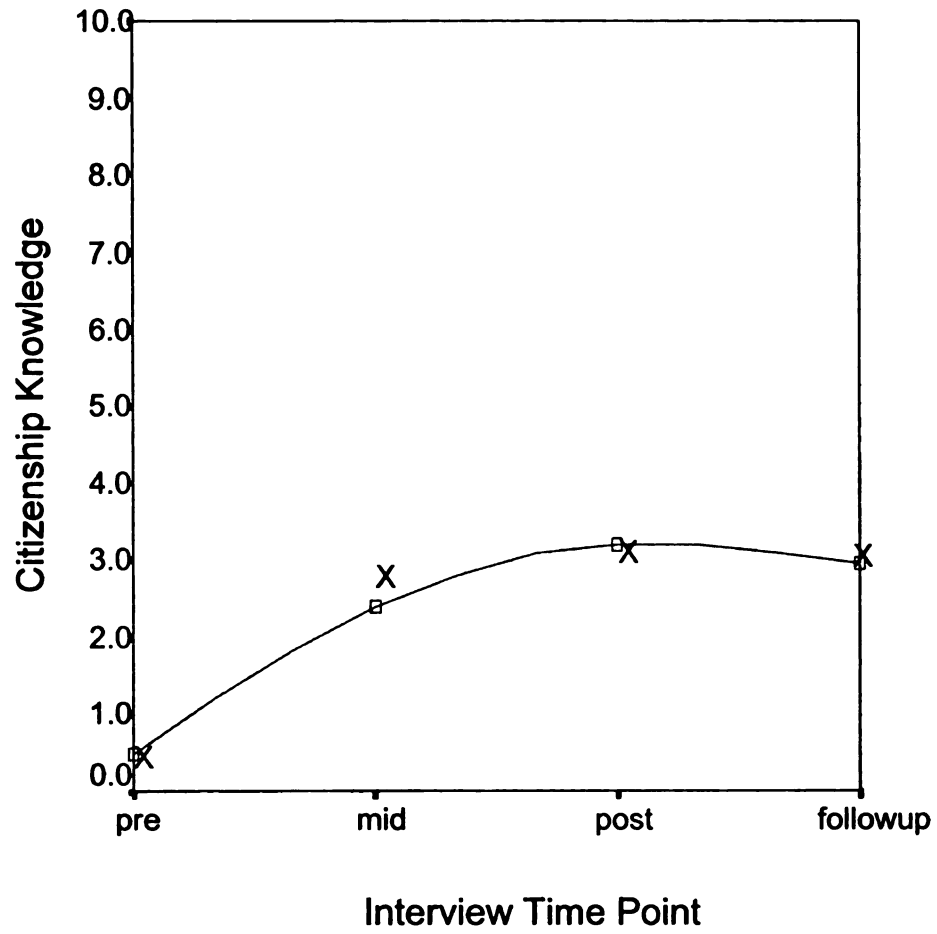


Table 11
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Citizenship Knowledge (CK) with Studying
for U.S. Citizenship Test as a Moderator

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean CK pre-intervention, β_{00} | 0.49 | 0.27 | 1.85 | .063 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | 0.18 | 1.04 | 0.18 | .862 |
| Studying for citizenship effect (interaction), β_{11} | 4.31 | 1.38 | 3.11 | .006 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.03 | 0.31 | 0.08 | .937 |
| Studying for citizenship effect (interaction), β_{21} | -1.07 | 0.42 | -2.54 | .020 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention CK, τ_{00} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | 7.77 | 19 | 86.38 | .000 |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | 0.62 | 19 | 55.83 | .000 |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 1.54 | | | |
| Deviance = 303.37 with 4 df | | | | |

Many participants talked about the U.S. history and government knowledge necessary for the U.S. citizenship test that they acquired through their participation in the intervention. For instance:

It's so helpful for me because I haven't go to school back in Laos or in Thailand either so since I got here I didn't know anything at all, but here with this program it's very good for me because right now I know who the presidents are and stuff like the law and all the Congress and the Senators and all those and who are they and how many they're supposed to be and it's very helpful. (#41302, p.1)

The most important thing I have learned from Wendy [undergraduate], she has taught me the citizenship, which what I wanted and expected from this class. She taught me about the presidents and the vice presidents, what came about what, and how many houses in the United States. And all the questions that she has taught me, I learned that, and I will keep those in mind, and that'll help me when I go and take my citizenship test, so that's the most important thing that I've learned from her. (#11402, p.2)

He [undergraduate] has taught me how the United States became the United States, what states were established first, and whatnot, and then, what comes over, and then, now, how many states we have total. And I've learned all that stuff

doing the citizenship and stuff, so I learned a lot of that stuff that I still remember. (#41401, p.4)

What came about, doing that, you [undergraduate and project] explained like the history of it, of the holiday, so I picked up that, and you have the discussion about how slavery, how did they, well how the white people were being mean to the black people, and made them slaves and stuff like that, and I learned all that. I never really knew about all that stuff, until I came here and study and learned that from you. So it's a lot of stuff that I've learned from you, and I've learned not just that, like the flag and stuff, what did they mean, the stars and everything else on the flag means, and how the United States became the United States and all the thirteen states, how did they become states. (#40902, p.3)

Clearly, participants felt they learned a great deal of useful knowledge about the history of the United States and the structure of the United States government. Acquiring this knowledge directly contributed to a major goal of many participants – to become U.S. citizens.

Hypothesis 3 – Community Participation

Although growth trajectories could not be examined for community participation (the measures of neighborhood and political participation were not useable because of a lack of variance), there are ways in which individuals' participation increased during and after the intervention. For instance, during the intervention public housing residents spent approximately four hours per week in their community centers where the learning circles were held. Their presence in this community space made them more visible to other community members and increased their contact with public housing staff and other resources and services (e.g., a community sewing program, the tutoring program for their children, food and clothing donations). During one learning circle, the resident council officers were in the community center to conduct resident council elections. Thus, residents learned about the resident council and voted in the election. Before this

encounter, many of the residents had believed that they had to be U.S. citizens to vote in resident council elections, which was not the case.

At another learning circle, a representative from the Lansing City Clerk's office brought a voting machine to demonstrate to participants how to vote and to provide them with a hands-on opportunity to learn to use the voting machine and understand it. Voting can be an intimidating process, particularly for people who cannot read English very well. The guest speaker also brought voter registration forms for everyone and explained how to fill them out and return them. None of the six participants who were already U.S. citizens had been previously registered to vote. As one participant described:

Yeah, I think that two important things that we can add to it is when that lady come to talk about how to vote and how we should fill out the paper to register and all those. I haven't seen those voting machines before. And this is my first time seeing it, so I think that it's interesting. (#40102, p.6)

Furthermore, at least six participants and three of their spouses have become U.S. citizens since the intervention ended. There are at least two other participants who have pending appointments to take the U.S. citizenship test. By becoming U.S. citizens and learning how to vote, many participants' ability to formally participate in U.S. political processes increased.

Hypothesis 4a – Access to Resources (Satisfaction with Resources)

The hypothesis that participants' access to resources would increase over time was partially confirmed. Growth trajectories for satisfaction with resources and difficulty accessing resources were measured in order to examine participants' access to resources. The growth trajectory model for satisfaction with resources revealed that participants' satisfaction with their resources increased significantly throughout the intervention, but decreased after the intervention ended (returning close to its initial level). This pattern of

change was consistent for all participants. Tables 12 & 13 and Figure 4 detail these findings.

The fixed and random effects for the intercept (participants' mean satisfaction with resources pre-intervention) indicate that average initial satisfaction with resources was 3.09 (approximately neutral midpoint), but significantly varied across individuals. The growth rate or linear change coefficient was .94, indicating that participants' satisfaction with resources increased by approximately one point during each 3-month time period (total increase of 2.82 points). This increase was statistically significant. However, the deceleration or non-linear change coefficient indicated that the increases in satisfaction with resources were somewhat attenuated in that they began to slow down and reverse direction. During the 9-month time period, the 2.82-point increase in satisfaction with resources was attenuated by a decrease of 2.61 points, for a net gain of 0.21 points. This attenuation was also significant. By examining the growth trajectory, it is evident that participants' satisfaction with resources increased throughout the intervention but decreased after the intervention ended. Likelihood-ratio chi square tests reveal that the best model was obtained by fixing the random effects for growth and deceleration, which indicates that the growth trajectory for satisfaction with resources was consistent across participants. In practical terms, these findings suggest that during the intervention, participants became much more satisfied with their resources; a two-point increase on a six-point scale during a 6-month time period is large. However, this satisfaction with their resources was not sustained after the intervention ended.

Table 12
Likelihood Ratio Tests for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Satisfaction with Resources¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| 1 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration ² | 252.99 | 7 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model 1:</i> | | | | | |
| 2 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration | 253.23 | 4 | 0.24 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| 3 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration (fixed) | 253.55 | 4 | 0.56 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>Compared to Model 3:</i> | | | | | |
| 4 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration (fixed) | 253.68 | 2 | 0.13 | 2 | n.s.³ |

¹Best model is indicated in bold.

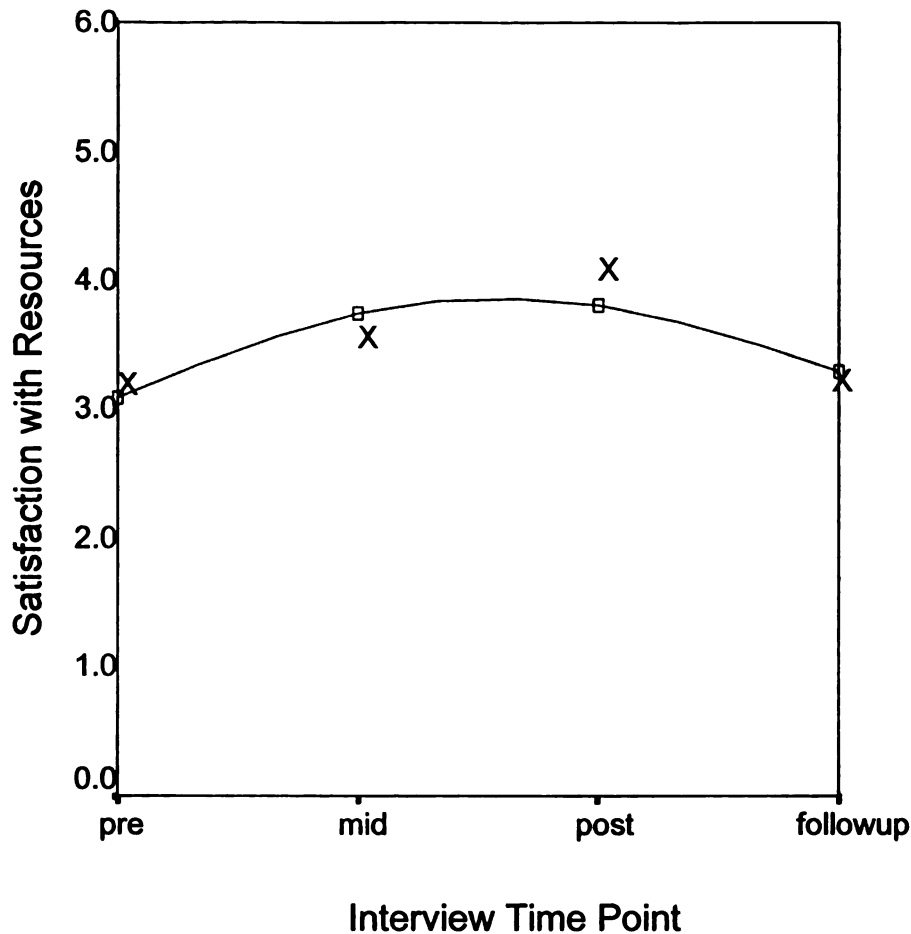
²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

Table 13
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Satisfaction with Resources (SWR)

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean SWR pre-intervention, β_{00} | 3.09 | 0.17 | 18.26 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | 0.94 | 0.21 | 4.53 | .000 |
| Mean acceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | -0.29 | 0.07 | -4.32 | .000 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention SWR, τ_{00} | 0.35 | 26 | 99.30 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Acceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 0.45 | | | |
| Deviance = 253.68 with 2 df | | | | |

Figure 4 – Growth Trajectory of Satisfaction with Resources



Hypothesis 4b – Access to Resources (Difficulty Accessing Resources)

Participants' difficulty accessing resources did not change significantly over time throughout or after the intervention. The best fitting model for this outcome was an intercept-only model, which indicates that consistent patterns of change on difficulty accessing resources did not exist (see Tables 14 & 15). Average initial difficulty accessing resources was quite high – 2.96 on a scale which ranged from 1 (not difficult at all) to 4 (very difficult). However, participants' initial difficulty accessing resources significantly varied across individuals.

Table 14
Likelihood Ratio Tests for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Difficulty Accessing Resources¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | Df | p value |
| <i>A1</i> Intercept, Growth, Deceleration² | 130.81 | 7 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model A1:</i> | | | | | |
| <i>A2</i> Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration | 131.25 | 4 | 0.44 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>A3</i> Intercept, Growth, Deceleration (fixed) | 130.91 | 4 | 0.10 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>Compared to Model 3:</i> | | | | | |
| <i>A4</i> Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration (fixed) | 134.29 | 2 | 3.38 | 2 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>B1</i> Intercept, Growth | 125.31 | 4 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model B1:</i> | | | | | |
| <i>B2</i> Intercept, Growth (fixed) | 128.66 | 2 | 3.35 | 2 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>C1</i> Intercept only⁴ | 126.41 | 2 | --- | --- | --- |

¹Best model is indicated in bold.

²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

⁴Comparisons among models with different numbers of effects at Level 2 (i.e., A, B, and C models) are not distributed as chi square under REML estimation. Therefore, they cannot be statistically compared to each other. Choice of the best model in this case was based upon general guidelines of the likelihood-ratio chi square test and the lack of significance of the growth or deceleration terms in any of the models.

Table 15
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Difficulty Accessing Resources (DAR)

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean DAR pre-intervention, β_{00} | 2.96 | 0.09 | 32.25 | .000 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention DAR, τ_{00} | 0.20 | 26 | 197.54 | .000 |
| Level-1 error, e_{0i} | 0.12 | | | |
| Deviance = 126.41 with 2 df | | | | |

Participants' discussions of resource issues confirm the quantitative findings.

They describe their actual access and satisfaction with resources as increasing during the intervention, but their perceptions about the difficulty of accessing resources and their ability to access resources without assistance persisted. For instance:

I'm very happy, very, very happy, that Joanna [undergraduate] is able to help me throughout all my medical problems, like getting a doctor for me, getting me into a new place, new environment, and with all her help, I'm able to get my diagnosis from the doctor. And then she also found me an eye doctor, which [previously] prevent me from not being able to see. (#41502, p.2)

Well to talk about the resources, I do need help a lot. I don't know how to read and write at all. But my husband, he a little bit better than me, but not that much either, so something that it's easy that he can understand and is able to do then it's okay, but something hard like fill applications or go apply for things and stuff, you know whatever that you need, then he can't do it either and I do need help on things like that. (#41002, pp.6-7)

Without Lori [undergraduate], I wouldn't be able to go and do anything here in my life, because what Lori's been doing is, if I have a problem or something that comes up that I don't understand or I don't know about, I'll tell my kids and my kids will automatically call Lori, and Lori will be right over, at that minute. And, I'm very thankful that she understands and she helps me so much and she makes my life so easier, much easier than before I met any one of you guys. I never been able to do anything, so I never really have anybody else to call, so it's either I don't know, or I'll just, if I don't know, I'll just leave it there, but I know it's important but I don't understand it so I'll just leave it there because there aren't anybody else that will help me. (#40402, p.3)

However, some Hmong participants indicated that they had learned how to access particular resources with their undergraduate that they would be able to access on their own in the future:

So without you [the project], we wouldn't be able to learn more English or any other things that are around Lansing that are resources that we don't know. So with you here helping the Hmong community, we actually know where things are and understand a little bit of English. (#40802, p.13)

Matt [undergraduate], I'm very, very happy that to met you and to be partner with you throughout this program, because you have helped me so much. Like, I don't understand, I know where the bills came from and I know where to go but I don't

know where to go, what room to go into to ask the question, or who to go about asking anything for the bill, so I learned things like that when I go with you. I learn that, okay, this is where and ask this question. This is where I go and talk to them about the bill. So I learned all that from you. So I just want to thank you very much and I'm very, very happy that you taken me to all the places, and take me where I need to go and tell me, show me how to do this and that, and so I appreciate it. (#41401, p.5)

Hypothesis 5 – Quality of Life

The hypothesis that participants' quality of life would increase over time during and after the intervention was also partially confirmed. Participants' quality of life increased significantly throughout the intervention, but declined somewhat after the intervention ended (see Tables 16 & 17 and Figure 5). The growth and deceleration coefficients indicate that the increases in quality of life were larger than the attenuation, although both effects were significant. Quality of life increased approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ point (.53) during each 3-month period for a total increase of 1.59 points, but was attenuated by a deceleration of 1.17 points for the nine-month time period, indicating a net gain for quality of life of 0.42 points. The random effects in the model suggested that participants' initial quality of life pre-intervention significantly varied, but that all participants followed similar growth trajectories. Likelihood-ratio chi square tests confirmed that the best-fitting model contained growth and deceleration effects that were fixed.

Table 16
Likelihood Ratio Tests for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Quality of Life¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| 1 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration ² | 234.94 | 7 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model 1:</i> | | | | | |
| 2 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration (fixed) | 237.68 | 4 | 2.74 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| 3 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration | 235.78 | 4 | 0.84 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>Compared to Model 2:</i> | | | | | |
| 4 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration (fixed) | 239.48 | 2 | 1.80 | 2 | n.s.³ |

¹Best model is indicated in bold.

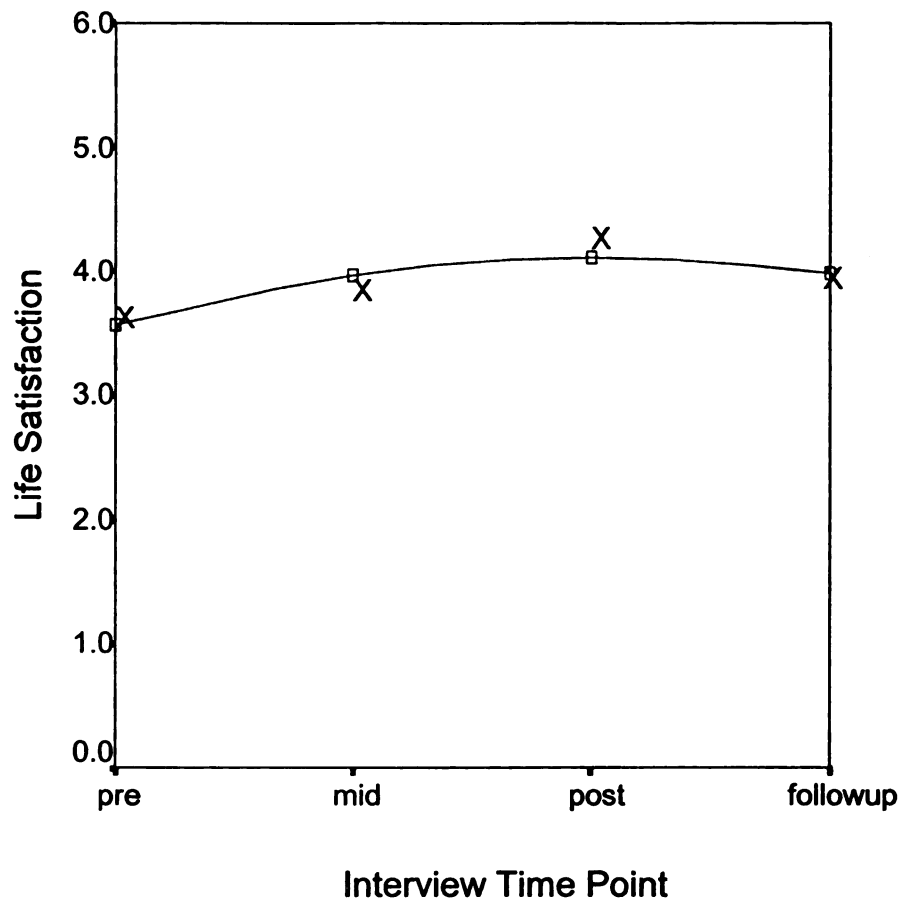
²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

Table 17
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Quality of Life (QOL)

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean QOL pre-intervention, β_{00} | 3.57 | 0.15 | 24.00 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | 0.53 | 0.20 | 2.59 | .010 |
| Mean acceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | -0.13 | 0.07 | -1.99 | .047 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention QOL, τ_{00} | 0.18 | 26 | 67.80 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Acceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{it} | 0.44 | | | |
| Deviance = 239.48 with 2 df | | | | |

Figure 5 – Growth Trajectory of Quality of Life



Quality of life is a more abstract concept and was not asked about explicitly in the qualitative interviews. However, one participant's description of how her life had improved through her involvement in the intervention provides a good example of improvements in participants' quality of life:

I'm very, very thankful for Jessica to have this class, and to have met Lori through this class and to teach me, to help me throughout all my difficulties in my life. Lori makes a lot of difference in my life, and she made my life much, much easier. (#40402, p.4)

Hypothesis 6a – Psychological Well-Being (Distress)

Similar to access to resources, the different measures of psychological well-being revealed different growth trajectories. The hypothesis that participants' distress would decrease over time during and after their participation in the intervention was partially confirmed. The growth trajectory of distress shows that participants' distress decreased significantly throughout the intervention but began to increase after the intervention ended (see Figure 6). This pattern was consistent for all individuals (see Table 18). Over each 3-month time period, participants' distress decreased approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ point (.74), for a total decrease of 2.22 points throughout the nine-months. However, this decrease was significantly attenuated by an increase in distress of 1.98 points, indicating a net decrease in participants' distress of 0.24 points.

Table 18
Likelihood Ratio Tests for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Distress¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| 1 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration ² | 194.69 | 7 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model 1:</i> | | | | | |
| 2 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration | 197.09 | 4 | 2.40 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| 3 Intercept, Growth, Deceleration (fixed) | 197.02 | 4 | 2.33 | 3 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>Compared to Model 2:</i> | | | | | |
| 4 Intercept, Growth (fixed), Deceleration (fixed) | 197.28 | 2 | 0.19 | 2 | n.s.³ |

¹Best model is indicated in **bold**.

²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

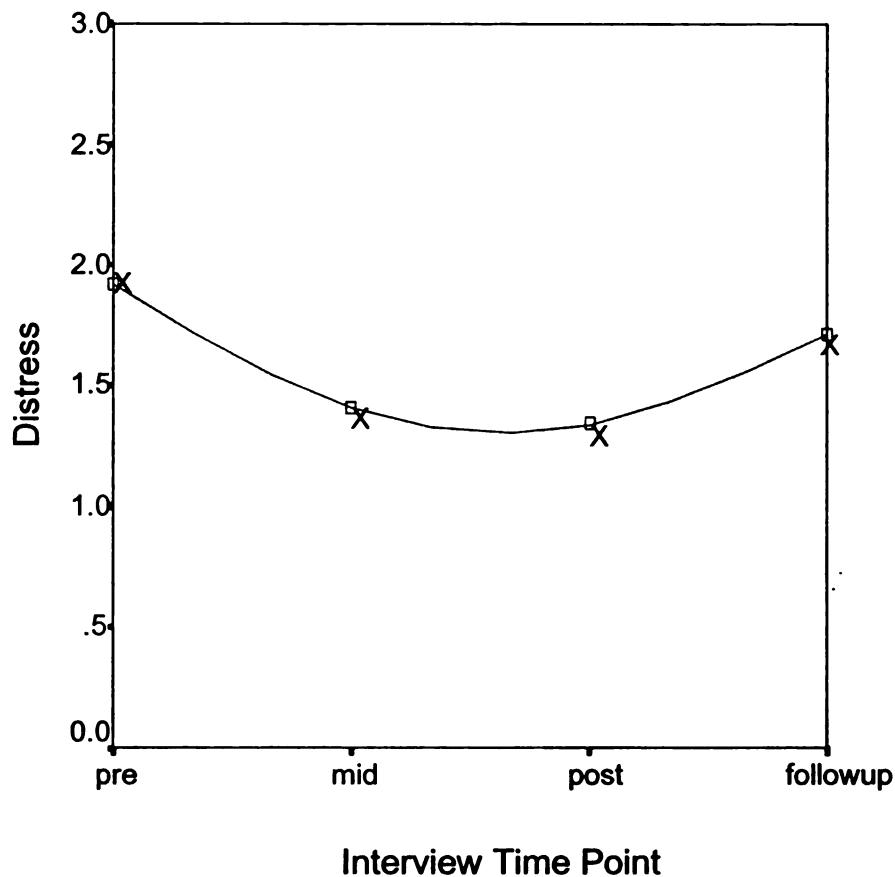
Table 19
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Distress

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|--------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean distress pre-intervention, β_{00} | 1.92 | 0.12 | 15.39 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | -0.74 | 0.16 | -4.64 | .000 |
| Mean acceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.22 | 0.05 | 4.27 | .000 |

| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------|
| Pre-intervention distress, τ_{00} | 0.40 | 26 | 86.82 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Acceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 0.27 | | | |

Deviance = 197.28 with 2 df

Figure 6 – Growth Trajectory of Distress



Similar to quality of life, participants did not tend to discuss how their involvement in the intervention impacted their levels of distress during the interviews. This is probably in large part because the questions posed to participants during the interviews focused on what participants had learned and their experiences working together. However, one participant talked about how the project had reduced her distress:

So I'm really glad to have a friend like Suzanne [undergraduate] here, because she always makes me happy when I see her. She's like a friend to me. So she takes away all of my worries and stuff, because when I was younger, around like 27 to 28, 29, I went downtown to study over there. And when I study, there'll be something written on the board, and I'll write it on top. But then, later on, I'd write it down here, which I didn't know that I wrote it down there, so...I wasn't really thinking about what's on the board. I was really thinking about my troubles. And that made me so depressed and sad. So then now, I changed it and I know that's one thing that's wrong about me, so I changed it. And now when I worry about stuff, I only worry at home, but when I come here I forget all about my worries. And, I seem to be happier, when I'm with friends. (#11202, p.3)

Hypothesis 6a – Psychological Well-Being (Happiness)

Participants' happiness did not change significantly over time throughout or after the intervention. The best-fitting model for this outcome was an intercept-only model, which indicates that consistent patterns of change over time on participants' happiness did not exist (see Tables 20 & 21). Participants' initial levels of happiness significantly varied across individuals.

Table 20
Likelihood Ratio Tests for Best Growth Trajectory Model of Happiness¹

| | <i>Model Fit</i> | | <i>Likelihood Ratio Test</i> | | |
|---|------------------|----------|------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | Deviance | df | LR χ^2 | df | p value |
| <i>A1</i> Intercept, Growth ² | 145.52 | 4 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>Compared to Model A1:</i> | | | | | |
| <i>A2</i> Intercept, Growth (fixed) | 150.25 | 2 | 4.73 | 2 | n.s. ³ |
| <i>B1</i> Intercept only⁴ | 149.59 | 2 | ---- | ---- | ---- |

¹Best model is indicated in bold.

²All terms are random unless noted as fixed.

³No significant decrement in fit compared with the more complex model.

⁴Comparisons among models with different numbers of effects at Level 2 (i.e., A and B models) are not distributed as chi square under REML estimation. Therefore, they cannot be statistically compared to each other. Choice of the best model in this case was based upon general guidelines of the likelihood ratio chi square test and the lack of significance of the growth term in any of the models.

Table 21
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Happiness

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean happiness pre-intervention, β_{00} | 1.59 | 0.06 | 26.84 | .000 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention happiness, τ_{00} | 0.04 | 26 | 44.79 | .012 |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 0.21 | | | |
| Deviance = 149.59 with 2 df | | | | |

However, several participants talked about how their involvement in the project had improved their lives and increased their happiness:

I'm very, very happy because without you guys [undergraduate and project facilitators], you guys make me happy because, nobody ever told me that I'm a strong person, I'm like this and like that, and I never saw anybody say things, all these good thing to me. So the reason why I'm crying is because you guys always say all these good stuff about me, and tell me that I could do this and that, and never put me down, and so it makes me feel so good and you guys just make me so happy. (#41401, p.15)

And also, it's like, every time you [undergraduate] come to my house, you always come in with a happy face, and like to talk a lot, and then you are not a shy person, so that's one of the thing that makes me so happy too. And then, it doesn't matter the time that we come to the learning circle, you teach me, and then you bring me over here. Or many times, you would take me to see things that I haven't seen before, back in Laos, and then, even though when I come over here, and it's something new to me, that I just saw for the first time, or learn or know for the first time. So, since I know you, you have taken me to so many places, different places, and then, learned, see so many different things and then, learn a lot of things, and then, that's very exciting to me. (#30602, p.10)

Hypothesis 7 – Mediating Relationships

In addition to considering the growth trajectories for each outcome over time, the impact that changes on certain outcomes had on changes of other outcomes was examined, in order to further delineate the mechanisms for change within the intervention. Among the hypothesized mediating effects (English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and access to resources as mediators of community participation, quality of life, and psychological well-being), one mediating relationship was detected (satisfaction with resources as a mediator of quality of life). To thoroughly explain these findings, the results of the mediating analyses will be discussed according to how they met each of the four criteria for mediation outlined by Baron & Kenny (1986).

Criterion 1: The predictor must be significantly related to the outcome. From the original growth trajectory analyses, two of the four hypothesized outcomes (community participation, quality of life, happiness, distress) could be potentially included in the mediating analyses. Quality of life and distress had significant growth trajectories, which suggested that these outcomes were significantly related to the predictor (intervention).²⁰

²⁰ As noted previously, the method of assessing significant relationships between the intervention and each outcome was based on testing the growth trajectories of the outcomes over time to determine if they were significant. Thus, conclusions from these analyses are more tentative than they would be if there were a true experimental design with a control group, which could more definitely rule out other uncertainties such as maturation or historical effects.

Criterion 2: The predictor must be significantly related to the proposed mediating variable. Of the four hypothesized mediators (English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, satisfaction with resources, difficulty accessing resources), three had significant growth trajectories and therefore could be potential mediators (English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and satisfaction with resources).

Criterion 3: The proposed mediating variable must be significantly related to the outcome. A correlation matrix of the two potential outcomes and three potential mediators was created (see Table 22). Based upon the correlations among variables, it was determined that two mediating relationships could be tested: 1) satisfaction with resources as a mediator of increased quality of life, and 2) satisfaction with resources as a mediator of decreased distress.

Table 22 – Correlations of Scales for Mediating Analyses

| Variable | Quality of Life | | | | Distress | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | <i>Pre</i> | <i>Mid</i> | <i>Post</i> | <i>Follow</i> | <i>Pre</i> | <i>Mid</i> | <i>Post</i> | <i>Follow</i> |
| English Proficiency | .11 | .16 | .37 | .06 | .00 | -.11 | .20 | -.05 |
| Perceived English Proficiency | .13 | .19 | .25 | -.03 | .11 | -.13 | .10 | .13 |
| Citizenship Knowledge | -.26 | -.36 | -.01 | -.18 | .30 | .15 | .06 | -.25 |
| Satisfaction with Resources | .43 | .72 | .57 | .84 | -.55 | -.40 | -.14 | -.09 |

Bold indicates $p < .05$, ***Bold italics*** indicates $p < .01$

In order to obtain an overall test of the significance of the relationship between the mediator (satisfaction with resources) and each of the outcomes (quality of life and distress), a model for each outcome was created, in which growth, deceleration, and satisfaction with resources as a time-varying covariate were entered at Level-1. These models basically tested the overall within-time effect of satisfaction with resources on

each outcome across all 4 time points, without regard to the timing of the intervention (see Tables 23 and 24), as opposed to the correlations presented in Table 22, which test the relationships at each time point individually. These models suggested that satisfaction with resources might mediate quality of life, because satisfaction with resources as a time-varying covariate (β_{30}) was significant in the model.

Table 23
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Quality of Life with Satisfaction with Resources as Time-Varying Covariate

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>Se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>P value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean quality of life pre-intervention, β_{00} | 1.81 | 0.25 | 7.28 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | -0.02 | 0.18 | -0.11 | .915 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.04 | 0.06 | 0.66 | .508 |
| Mean satisfaction with resources effect, β_{30} | 0.57 | 0.07 | 7.97 | .000 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention quality of life, τ_{00} | 0.06 | 26 | 44.96 | .012 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Satisfaction with resources effect, τ_{30} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 0.30 | | | |
| Deviance = 193.19 with 2 df | | | | |

Table 24
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Distress with Satisfaction with Resources as Time-Varying Covariate

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean distress pre-intervention, β_{00} | 2.46 | 0.26 | 9.59 | .000 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | -0.58 | 0.17 | -3.33 | .001 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.17 | 0.06 | 3.05 | .003 |
| Mean satisfaction with resources effect, β_{30} | -0.18 | 0.07 | -2.41 | .016 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention distress, τ_{00} | 0.13 | 26 | 75.96 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Satisfaction with resources effect, τ_{30} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 0.26 | | | |
| Deviance = 193.29 with 2 df | | | | |

Next, the effects of satisfaction with resources were further separated to determine if they were related to the intervention or based solely upon a pre-existing relationship between the outcomes and satisfaction with resources. A second model for each outcome, in which the growth and deceleration components were included in Level-1 and participants' initial scores on satisfaction with resources at the pre-interview were included at Level-2, was created to determine if the pre-intervention levels of the satisfaction with resources affected the trajectory of quality of life or distress over time (see Tables 25 & 26). The quality of life model revealed that pre-intervention satisfaction with resources was related to pre-intervention quality of life, but that pre-intervention satisfaction with resources had no additional effect on the growth trajectory (growth or deceleration effects) of quality of life. This provides further evidence that satisfaction with resources might mediate quality of life because it demonstrates that the

growth trajectory of quality of life is not a function of pre-intervention levels of satisfaction with resources. The distress model followed the same pattern.

Table 25
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Quality of Life with Pre-Intervention Satisfaction with Resources as Mediator

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean quality of life pre-intervention, β_{00} | 2.22 | 0.47 | 4.71 | .000 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on mean quality of life pre-intervention, β_{01} | 0.42 | 0.14 | 3.13 | .005 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | 0.53 | 0.50 | 1.06 | .291 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on growth rate, β_{11} | -0.01 | 0.17 | -0.04 | .967 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | -0.10 | 0.21 | -0.49 | .622 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on deceleration, β_{21} | -0.01 | 0.07 | -0.08 | .934 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention quality of life, τ_{00} | 0.08 | 25 | 42.89 | .014 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{it} | 0.45 | | | |
| Deviance = 235.58 with 2 df | | | | |

Table 26
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Distress with Pre-Intervention Satisfaction
with Resources as Mediator

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean distress pre-intervention, β_{00} | 3.41 | 0.47 | 7.26 | .000 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on mean distress pre-intervention, β_{01} | -0.47 | 0.14 | -3.28 | .003 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | -1.27 | 0.63 | -2.01 | .044 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on growth rate, β_{11} | 0.17 | 0.19 | 0.89 | .375 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.26 | 0.21 | 1.27 | .205 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on deceleration, β_{21} | -0.01 | 0.06 | -0.23 | .815 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention distress, τ_{00} | 0.13 | 25 | 73.54 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{it} | 0.25 | | | |
| Deviance = 194.38 with 2 df | | | | |

Criterion 4: When the proposed mediating variable is included in a model with the predictor and the outcome, the relationship between the predictor and outcome must decrease. In the final model for each outcome, the growth and deceleration components were entered at Level-1. In addition, a clearer separation of pre-intervention and intervention effects was achieved by entering the scores on satisfaction with resources at time points 2-4 (mid, post, and follow-up) deviated from the satisfaction with resources scores at time point 1 (pre) as a time-varying covariate at Level-1. This resulted in the covariate reflecting within-person change (controlling for the pre-intervention level of satisfaction with resources). Raw scores of pre-intervention satisfaction with resources

remained in the model at Level 2. This combined model was the final test of a mediating relationship.

In the quality of life model (see Table 27), the within-person change on satisfaction with resources (β_{30}) was significant as a time-varying covariate, which indicated that within-person change on satisfaction with resources was related to the growth trajectory of quality of life, controlling for the correlation between these variables pre-intervention. Furthermore, the growth and deceleration effects were no longer significant, which provided evidence that changes in satisfaction with resources might mediate the intervention effects on quality of life over time. The distress model (see Table 28) did not provide evidence of a mediating relationship between satisfaction with resources and distress. Although the model showed a pre-intervention correlation between satisfaction with resources and distress (β_{01}), the within-person change on satisfaction with resources (β_{30}) was not significant as a time-varying covariate. In conclusion, strong evidence exists for only one mediating relationship out of the many hypothesized: satisfaction with resources as a mediator of increased quality of life over time.

Table 27
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Quality of Life with Within-Person Change
on Satisfaction with Resources as Time-Varying Covariate and Satisfaction with
Resources as a Mediator

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>p value</i> |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Mean quality of life pre-intervention, β_{00} | 2.31 | 0.46 | 5.05 | .000 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on mean quality of life pre-intervention, β_{01} | 0.41 | 0.14 | 2.97 | .007 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | -0.95 | 0.72 | -1.32 | .188 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on growth rate, β_{11} | 0.28 | 0.21 | 1.33 | .184 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.27 | 0.23 | 1.18 | .237 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on deceleration, β_{21} | -0.07 | 0.07 | -1.03 | .302 |
| Within-person change on satisfaction with resources effect, β_{30} | 0.60 | 0.09 | 6.78 | .000 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | χ^2 | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention quality of life, τ_{00} | 0.06 | 25 | 44.75 | .009 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Within-person change on satisfaction with resources, τ_{30} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_{ti} | 0.30 | | | |
| Deviance = 202.50 with 2 df | | | | |

Table 28
Coefficients for Growth Trajectory Model of Distress with Within-Person Change on Satisfaction with Resources as Time-Varying Covariate and Satisfaction with Resources as a Mediator

| <i>Fixed Effect</i> | <i>Coefficient</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t ratio</i> | <i>P value</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Mean distress pre-intervention, β_{00} | 3.41 | 0.47 | 7.23 | .000 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on mean distress pre-intervention, β_{01} | -0.47 | 0.14 | -3.27 | .004 |
| Mean growth rate (linear change), β_{10} | -1.10 | 0.67 | -1.64 | .100 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on growth rate, β_{11} | 0.14 | 0.20 | 0.69 | .489 |
| Mean deceleration (non-linear change), β_{20} | 0.22 | 0.21 | 1.02 | .309 |
| Satisfaction with resources pre-intervention effect on deceleration, β_{21} | -0.01 | 0.06 | -0.11 | .913 |
| Within-person change on satisfaction with resources effect, β_{30} | -0.07 | 0.09 | -0.86 | .391 |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | <i>Variance Component</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p value</i> |
| Pre-intervention distress, τ_{00} | 0.13 | 25 | 72.82 | .000 |
| Growth rate, τ_{10} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Deceleration rate, τ_{20} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Within-person change on satisfaction with resources, τ_{30} | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Level-1 error, e_i | 0.25 | | | |
| Deviance = 198.57 with 2 df | | | | |

Additional Qualitative Results

Evidence from Hmong participants' interviews with their undergraduates at the end of the intervention supported and confirmed the quantitative findings (growth trajectories), as illustrated by the quotes presented with each outcome. In addition, the interviews were important because they provided opportunities to explore the other ways that the intervention impacted participants. Finally, these interviews provided an opportunity to examine the impact of the intervention on the undergraduate participants,

and the process of the intervention in terms of the relationships among Hmong and undergraduate participants. The qualitative data that supported the specific study hypotheses were presented with the growth trajectories. Additional qualitative findings are discussed below, according to the following categories: 1) emergent impacts of the intervention on Hmong participants, 2) impacts of the intervention on undergraduate participants, 3) relationships among Hmong and undergraduate participants, 4) suggestions for improvement, and 5) gender/gender role issues.

Emergent Impacts on Hmong Participants

Given the individualized nature of the intervention, in which each Hmong participant worked on different learning and advocacy goals with her undergraduate advocate, it was expected that the project would have varied effects on participants, as well as a consistent impact on the outcomes measured quantitatively. In addition, it was anticipated that unexpected impacts might occur, which was the case. Furthermore, there were certain impacts that would have been difficult to measure quantitatively, such as the cultural exchange that occurred among participants. Hmong participants talked about many different ways that the intervention affected them, including the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, increased environmental mastery, self-sufficiency, and self-confidence, increased social support, the setting of future goals, positive impacts on their children, valuing of their experience and knowledge by others, validation of their Hmong identity, and increased understanding of the diversity in the United States and the possibilities for people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures to work together.

Skills and Knowledge

Math. In addition to the increased English proficiency and citizenship knowledge mentioned by most participants, there were other skills and knowledge that participants acquired, many of which depended a great deal on their interests and goals. Several participants talked about learning math:

And so, we study a lot, and I don't feel like I am learn a lot, but I learn a lot of the math stuff which I never knew before, and he [undergraduate] taught me a lot of the math which I needed for my work, so it's a good thing for me. (#41202, p.3)

And also math, you know I can count 1, 2, 3 but never know how to do addition and subtraction before, so I learned that also, and then that's very good. (#41302, p.2)

Employment. Many participants had problems at work, which they often talked about during the learning circles. Some wanted to find new jobs with better pay, hours or location; others did not want to leave the jobs they had but were distressed by unfair treatment such as favoritism and forced overtime and by misunderstandings caused by communication difficulties. Participants mentioned two ways in which the intervention impacted these issues: some people talked about learning how to fill out job applications and follow-up with prospective employers, while others focused on what they had learned from a union organizer who had come to the learning circles to talk about workers' rights, participants' problems at work, and unions.

I want to come to this class first to learn English, so I understand the English language better, and the second thing was to learn how to put an application in for work because I never done one before and I didn't know how. And with her [undergraduate's] help she helped me to do that. And do application and call and see if they checked the references and have seen my application yet. (#40402, p.1)

I have learned how to write the application for work. You know, I didn't learn that, where you're supposed to write your name, your telephone, your address, and I learned that from you [undergraduate and project]. I never knew anything about that. And the second thing was, oh well if we go to work, there's unions. I didn't really, I don't know anything about union, until I came into this class and

you said that unions help you out if you have a union. And I didn't know that until now. So I'm really thankful that I have learned something different and something new that I didn't really know that existed in the American culture. (#10502, p.5)

The most important thing that I got was from the speaker that came in to talk about the union, how to set up a union, and how it work, and how to get along with our boss, and co-workers and how to get friends and people that are around you to form a union, and that's the most important thing as for work. (#10802, p.5)

Participants also talked about how the union organizer and discussions about unions and workplace issues allowed them to focus and build upon their own experiences at work – raising their consciousness about their rights as workers and observing possibilities for real change through hearing about my work with others at Michigan State University throughout the year to form a union for graduate employees:

Also, that guy from the union come to talk about that. I believe that really important for everybody. And then, I like it a lot. And it's quite interesting to me...and coming to talk about the union, but just peoples' discussion about what happens in their own jobs, and stuff, and what's going on. And just hearing about you [Jessica] organizing the grad union, and then talking and talking, that's been a really interesting experience. So I'd say it's discussions like that, I think I've learned a lot. (#40102, p.6)

Environmental Mastery/Self-Sufficiency

In addition to concrete skills and knowledge, many participants talked about a more general sense of environmental mastery and self-sufficiency – being able to do the things that they wanted to do in the “outside world” and being able to accomplish these things without being entirely dependent on others. Participants mentioned several dimensions of this area, including: general feelings of self-sufficiency and environmental mastery, how their undergraduate partners had taught and shown them how to do specific things so that they could do them on their own, and, finally, that despite what they had learned, they still needed to know more in order to accomplish their goals.

General self-sufficiency/environmental mastery. Many participants talked about the general feelings and abilities of self-sufficiency and environmental mastery they had acquired through their involvement in the intervention:

I came to here, I didn't know anything. People ask me a question and you know that you're going to say yes or no, but you don't even know, when you look at that person you don't know if you're going to say yes or you're going to say no, which word means what. So it was kind of confusing. But then as time went by through this class, I got the chance to understand and learn more. So when I went home I was able to look at the letters that came in the mail and understand, like what this bill is for, how much I have to pay, or where do I go and pay for this, and etcetera. Like, all the other letters that comes in, I was able to understand where it was from, and, what the letter is for, so thanks to you [undergraduate and project], I was able to know, understand that and just do it for myself. (#10502, p.5)

So then now I have the confidence to start learning the citizenship. And then I thought well maybe if I could get a little bit down I could get more. So then now I'm more of helping myself, where I could understand that I could get more and more. (#11202, p2).

Like before, I used to depend on people to take me to the doctors, to go and translate for me, and when it gets so hard, I just figure that, why don't I just try to go by myself and then see what happens. And then I try at first and then next time, I have more confidence in going by myself. And then, if they say things that I understand, then I understand. If not, then I just tell them that I don't understand and then, as time goes on, the more you go by yourself, you learn more, you understand more. (#40202, pp.4-5)

At first I don't know anything at all, so then it's because all of you are helping me and then now, I'm like a little baby that learned how to walk...(#40701, p.14)

Transfer of skills from undergraduates to Hmong participants. Numerous participants talked about specific skills or knowledge they had learned from their undergraduate partners that enabled them to be more self-sufficient:

But outside Wendy has taught me a lot of stuff. Just everyday life, and how to do things, that, she'll come over, and look at all my papers and all my bills, and help me to help my kids, and this is how I, she teach me, this is how you do this to help your kids out later on. And she teach me that, and I didn't, sometimes, I'm like, "Wow, I didn't know that," you know? It's good that she's teaching me, because I'm learning. And, just other things that she does for me. It helps me learn. Like

she'll show me how to go about doing, calling for something, or, this is how I do something, or when she sees something that's wrong in my house, or something that's going wrong, she'll let me know, and then I'll fix it. And then she'll, then I'm like, "Oh yeah," and next time I'll do it that way. So I learned a lot from her, just because she was raised here so she knows how it is. And I was raised in a different place where I usually just, I know the new ways, but there's only few things I know about the new life here, so she has taught me a lot of stuff. (#11402, pp.8-9)

Sara has been able to help me in so many ways, and teaching me that, to make things look more simple than before. Like, for example, she take me to renew my green card, and so show us how to do it, and then what to do and then, so she's always been there for me whenever that I need her or take me to things that, I don't know how to do, helping me. (#20102, p.2)

Well I am very, very old, but thanks to you, I'm able to learn things that for me to work outside the house here, like for example, he [undergraduate] taught me the numbers and how to count money when I go out to the outside world and to the stores, I know what to buy, I know how much I have to give money. (#21402, p.2)

I feel like everything has to be paperwork and stuff, because without them, then I will send them a bill and a check with that bill, and then they're like, "okay well you didn't pay for this bill yet." So I'm like, "wait a minute, I know I paid for it." So like Matt [undergraduate] was saying, I learned that from Matt. You know, you have to keep all your paperwork, all your receipts and stuff that you paid for their bill or whatever that you need so you could go, if you have a problem, then you could go and say, "hey, I have a receipt for this and I did pay you"...I never learned that you have to keep all, America's all about having paper, having a receipts, and stuff so I never really kept anything until I met Matt. And you showed me how to do that, and, not just showing me how to do it, he helped me, he bought me a file folder thing where he put label and okay, this is Medicaid paper, this is hospital paper, this is other bills paper, and, he helped me do, he bought me a folder and wrote it down and everything so now I remember to go and then put everything in that slot in the folder. (#41401, p.7)

More to learn. Although participants felt they had improved their ability to accomplish their daily tasks and goals on their own, it was clear that many believed they needed to keep learning:

And also, I think that before, I'm just like the blind person and I can't see what I'm doing or can't guess what's going to happen next tomorrow or ahead of me. So, but right now, I do understand a little bit and then if somebody asks me to go do something that I have learned, then I'll be able to go do it because I really

know it. But if somebody asks me something new, that I haven't heard before, then I don't understand and I can't do it. So, it's something that I still need to learn about. (#20601, p.2)

The program is very good because my children are so shy. Even though they go to school and study English, sometime I need them to do something for me and then they will say, "Well, why don't you learn how to do it yourself, because I'm too shy. I don't want to do this, I don't want to do that." So it's good that I learn to do it on my own, and then it's good that we have program like this that I will be able to learn and then hopefully to do things on my own later because if the programs end, and then it will be hard. (#20802, pp.2-3)

Self-Confidence

In addition to their increased self-sufficiency and environmental mastery (and probably related to it), many participants felt better about themselves and more confident in their abilities as a result of the intervention, both in terms of what they were able to learn and accomplish and from the affirmation and support of their undergraduate partners:

If I was to go and take it [the U.S. citizenship exam], I'm pretty sure I'm going to pass it and do really good because I know that I learned so much from her and she taught me so much. She just kept on drilling me on all the question over and over and over again, and I mean, I just know it so well I think, you know, I feel so good about myself for knowing it. (#10502, p.2)

I feel that before I always thought, okay, I need to worry about my kids, my husband, and everybody else that has a problem, besides me. But now I understand how hard English is, I'm going to do this for myself. I'm going to study English, take the citizen test, and pass it, and know that I could do it for myself, and then, I could help others. (#11202, p.9)

I'll tell them [the undergraduates] that I don't know, and I can't learn, and I'm not smart...but they'll just say, "Yeah you are, you know that you're good. You know the language, just say it. You don't have to be embarrassed about it. I'm not." So they give you, they boost your self-esteem up a little bit. So it makes you feel a lot better, so it makes you want to learn more. It makes you want to speak more, so then you get better over time. (#11402, p.12)

But with me, I never went to school in my old country. When I came to the United States I never really learned, went to school, or don't know what school are, or teachers are, until I met you [undergraduate] and Jessica and you have this

class for me. So now I have confidence in myself when, if this class is over, and nobody's here to help me, at least I know that I can do it when I go out there, like to downtown or some other ESL school where I can know that I'll be able to pick up a pencil and paper and start writing and learning how to read and write and not be afraid, like I did before I took this class. (#40402, p.5)

Related to self-confidence, one participant talked about how her whole perspective about herself and how she related to other people had changed:

In the past, when I had people that criticize me, then I sort of like give them an attitude or criticize them back, or say something that will hurt them even more than what they said to me. But now that I think about it, and the way all of you have taught me in class and during the discussion, I think that maybe they treat me that way because they haven't know me that well, that's why they act that way towards me. But once I try to be nice to them and talk to them and once we get to know each other then we might become friends. And that's one of the things that I learned, that if people criticize you or say things to you that you don't like it, you should just try to talk to them and maybe get to know them and that's one of things that I learned that I want to try to achieve it and then see if I will be able to do it. (#41302, p.4)

Social Support

Another area of participants' lives that was affected by their participation in the intervention was their increased interaction with people in the Hmong community and with a broader network of Americans, which resulted in new friendships and more social support.

Because of this program I have the opportunity to meet a lot of other people and know everybody and that's very good for me and probably for others too. (#30302, p.7)

I'm so happy too, that, because of all of you, that's why we had the opportunity to come and to learn, and to make new friends and to see each other, to meet each other and know each other. Otherwise, we would never know each other or see each other. (#41101, p.7)

The best thing I learned from coming to participate in this project is to have more friends and to be able to come to class and express myself. (#41302, p.6)

Future Goals

With new skills, knowledge, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, and social support, participants seemed to be setting new goals for themselves and focusing on their futures.

So no matter what, if there is a place to study, I'm going to do it. I'm definitely going to be a part of it. Because if there are any programs like this or any teaching like this, if you let me know where I could go to get help on learning more English, then I'll do it too...But if I do get my citizenship in the future, then I still want to go to school, and I still want to learn other things. Like my math and my reading for work because I want to be able to fill out applications so I could get a better job, because my job is good right now, but the pay is not that great, so I want to do better and know better, so I could get a better job, too. (#10502, pp.13-14)

Well, I have a lot of things I wanted to learn. I wanted to learn math, I wanted to learn more English, so there's a lot things I wanted to learn that I can't say. So I still wanted to learn and then learn more. (#40701, p.5)

For some participants, these goals tended to focus on wanting the program to continue because it seemed to represent an opportunity they never had before:

I still wanted to learn math and learn reading and writing and learn more English so next year if you still have this program again, let me know because I still wanted to participate in it too...But I still wanted to say if you have it again next year then let me know because I wanted to make more friends and hopefully learn more. (#41302, p.8)

I very appreciate that you have started a program like this, with your class. All the discussion with me being new to the country, I feel that I have learned so much from this project, so if you ever have it again, I want to be a part of it, and I want to learn more... (#40902, p.10)

Impact on Children

In addition to discussing how the intervention had affected them individually, participants often highlighted the impact the undergraduates had on their children. They mentioned fun activities their children did with the undergraduates as well as the academic help their children received:

The most important thing about that is, well, with Jennifer [undergraduate], she takes my kids out a lot and she takes me too, but because I have that little boy that follows me everywhere I can't go anywhere, so I didn't learn much, but I know my kids did. And my kids always go out with Jennifer and she takes them everywhere, and my kids having so much fun with her...(#10802, p.8)

But besides that, you [undergraduate] come over to my house and you help my kids and they're done with their homework but then you look at it, and if it's not right, then you automatically help them out and correct for them, and so I appreciate that things that you have done for me. (#10502, p.6)

I want to thank Suzanne for helping my kids out and talking to them in English and taking them playing games and having fun with her and stuff. And they tell me they learn a lot from her...(#11202, p.7)

Participants talked not only about how much their children had learned and been helped by the undergraduates, but also about the relationships that many undergraduates formed with their children:

And also my kids, they like you [undergraduate] a lot and get a long with you a lot. And then if you call and say that you're going to come, they are waiting for you and they are looking at the window for you to come...(#40202, p.9)

You help my family a lot, and my kids really love you, and we're always waiting for you to come over, and you helped me throughout everything and you helped my kids, [they're] always looking forward to see you, and go out with you and have fun. (#40402, p.15)

Cultural Exchange

One of the important ways in which the project impacted participants was by bringing people of many different cultures into close interaction with each other. In fact, the contact went beyond interaction among participants to become genuine engagement, in which participants shared ideas, learned from each other, and addressed issues together. This occurred both in the learning circle group discussions and in the time pairs of Hmong participants and undergraduates spent working together during one-on-one learning time and outside the learning circles doing advocacy together. During the group

discussions, translators made it possible for Hmong participants and undergraduates to express themselves and to ask questions of each other to a degree they probably never would have had on their own because of language differences. On the other hand, spending time together without a translator provided very different opportunities for learning and interaction. Taken together, these experiences impacted people in many ways. Hmong participants talked about several of these, including changing ideas about race and the ways in which barriers and stereotypes were diminished, feeling that others valued their knowledge and experience, having their identity as Hmong validated, and learning more about American culture and recognizing the diversity that exists within America.

Race: Breaking down barriers and stereotypes. For many participants, this experience seemed to be one of the first in which they had worked closely with someone who was not Hmong. This suggested to some of them that people of different races and cultures were not as different from them as they had once believed:

I saw you [undergraduate who is Korean American] and I start speaking Hmong to you, and I'm thinking you're Hmong, but then as I spoke to you, you didn't say anything, so I'm like, "whoa, you're not Hmong!" But then again, you're better than I expected. So I learned so much from you, so I just want to thank you. I really learned from you. Even though you're not the same race, I feel like you're one of us. (#10502, p.3)

It almost seems like you and I, Jennifer [undergraduate], we're from different part of the world, and different race and all, but it almost seems like we're just like sisters, we're like one race, and it's very, very happy that I have met you and know you. (#10802, p.9)

We are pretty much similar, compared to the way our cultures, and some of the things that we do, we have pretty much, most of the time we do things pretty similar – some of the words, and then some of the stuff that we're doing. And then, my daughter was saying, that she heard that some people were saying that at the beginning we all from the same country, from Africa, but then we spread out. So we still have the same gene and the same bone type, same structure, but then

we just speak different language and that's it. To me, I feel like we all pretty much the same, you know? But we just do different things, and different ways, and that's it. But I do learn that, since I become a part of this group, I know that at first I didn't know the American people but now I know we pretty much the same. (#20102, p.4)

For other participants, the opportunities for close interaction with non-Hmong people, cultural exchange, and discussion gave them a better understanding of stereotyping and how it impacts relationships among people of different races and cultures:

I have learned a lot about the American culture so it's very helpful for me because I never knew any of these things before. But I have learned a lot about the holidays we celebrate in this country that we never have back in our country. Also, I remember one time we were discussing about the stereotype, Tim [undergraduate] and we were discussing about, don't just assume or just judge people by the way they act or dress, unless you know who they are and so I learned about that too. And that kind of made me think that it's good, it made me realize that that's true, and then I have a different thoughts right now, you know? And then also, the way that people made me realize that maybe some people would treat me differently because they probably think the same way that I used to think. And so I learned that too and so it's good. (#41302, p.3)

Participants' knowledge and experience valued. A very difficult aspect of the refugee experience is that the knowledge and experience refugees bring from their former homeland often seems useless to them in their new country or unrecognized and invisible to others. Refugees often cannot use their existing skills and are forced to take jobs that are not challenging or interesting to them. Thus, the valued social roles they once held may no longer be available to them. This often makes people feel that they do not know anything or that they do not have things to contribute to their new country, community, or neighbors. Through this project, many participants seemed to regain the feeling that they had things to teach to others in the group and that their experience and knowledge was important.

One thing that I taught to the students here is my experience during when I was fleeing from Laos. I was trying to get away from the war and so we got to the

border, and then the Viet Cong caught us, so they took us to their place in Vietnam, they took us there, and we stay there for about two years. And I mean, we were all scared and afraid that they were going to kill us, but after the two years, we just took off on our feet, and we just walked, and get away from the Viet Cong. We just went over to Thailand. And so we were really lucky. So I have taught them that, my experience during that time of the war. (#10502, p.8)

The best thing about this project is that Jessica's always asking everybody to see if they have other ideas to talk about. And I really like that because what if I have something and then she keeps on giving all her idea? What if I had want to talk something, and then she'll say, "Anybody who has any other ideas, just tell me and then we'll talk about it." And I'm really glad that you did that because when I have something to say, we're there to say it, we're there to talk about it. So, I really like that about this project. (#11202, p.11)

I feel the same way as you [undergraduate] do, because you learn a lot from the Hmong culture, and I also learned a lot about the American culture. So, you haven't learned everything yet, and the same goes here, I haven't learned everything yet about the American culture, so we're kind of in the same boat. You're trying to learn my stuff, I'm trying to learn yours. (#40402, p.6)

Validating identity of the Hmong. Breaking down barriers among community

members and cultures and recognizing each other's knowledge and experience are important, but it is also very valuable for newcomers to have their identity recognized and validated in their new country. Living somewhere where no one knows who you are or that your language and culture even exists can be difficult, particularly for a group such as the Hmong who are relatively unknown and have never had a homeland. Many participants talked about how pleased they were that now more people knew about the Hmong people:

I think that this project is good for everybody. And I think that it teach other students to know how Hmong peoples looks like, and where they're from and what they are, that we are different from Vietnamese and other people – Chinese, and other people. Because we look alike and I think that we don't have a country of our own and then people don't know the Hmong people that much so we're sort of like under everybody, you know? But it's good that we have this program where they know who we are and then just so that they don't think that only Vietnamese people are out there or only Chinese people are out there – everybody's Vietnamese or Chinese. Just so that they know that there are many

different kinds of people – Oriental or Asian people – and that we are the Hmong people, and it's good that we have this program. (#20601, p.5)

Without this class I wouldn't know any other people, and you wouldn't know that we're Hmong people. So now that you know Hmong people, you know how we are, you know how we live, and, you know where the community is, so whenever you see us, just come and talk to us. We're always friends to everybody, it's just that people don't really seem to think we're Hmong. They think we're just all Chinese or whatever, Asian. We're Asian, we're from there, but we're actually Hmong people, so it's good that you have come here and learned about us too, and good thing you come here because we learn about the American culture as well, and so it is really good for us both. (#40402, p.3)

In addition to the undergraduates who learned about Hmong participants' culture, experience, and knowledge, one Hmong participant talked about how the project had provided her with an opportunity to learn about her own culture. Many young adult refugees, particularly those raised in refugee camps, are caught between two cultures (e.g., cultures of their homeland and country of resettlement), neither of which they know well:

[Hmong participant is responding in agreement to undergraduate who talked about learning about Hmong culture] Also, to me, I don't really know what it's like, I don't really know the Hmong culture that much either, because I was born in Laos and then raised in Thailand. So back then, we lived in the camp and then we don't do much or practice much about our cultures – like in the camp we don't do things that we did back in Laos. (#41002, p.5)

Learning about American people/culture and diversity in meaning of "American."

Many newcomers arrive in the United States with the idea that all Americans are white, blond, blue-eyed, and middle class. They may not view people of color as Americans and they may not perceive themselves as potential Americans. Through their involvement in this project, many participants talked about how their understanding of what it means to be "American" had changed.

I have learned what is Thanksgiving. We celebrate different, and you show us how you, the American culture, how do they celebrate Thanksgiving, what was

eaten, and stuff like all the different foods that was eaten by the American and us, you know, how different that was. And I learned that on the holidays, we don't celebrate all the holidays. And some people celebrate and some people don't. So I always think all Americans celebrate all the same holidays, but they don't. Some people celebrate some holidays, some people don't. I never really know anything about that until now with this class. (#11402, p.8)

And then also, I didn't know that the American people came from different country to this country. And then, I learned that by coming to this class. So I think it's very interesting. I learn a lot. (#20102, p.1)

It's not just us that learn from the teacher [undergraduates], I think the teacher also learn from us too. I know that this country is a really popular country and it's a country with many diversity cultures and people, and many times I still don't know how many different type of people live in this country – that it's just not only for the white people and the black people. Because sometimes I see the black people and I know that they are black but I don't know where they are from. They might come from different country. And for the white people, some of them have white hair, some of them have brown hair and some of them have blonds, and some of them have green eyes, blue eyes, brown eyes. (#20601, p.7)

For some participants, the cultural exchange provided them with the opportunity to make conscious decisions about which parts of American culture they wanted to integrate into their lives.

When I go to work I have friends like Bao and Yeng [two other Hmong participants in the program] and we were talking about what we learned and the difference between the cultures – the American and the Hmong cultures, and then what we should try to adopt from the American culture so that it will be easier for our kids and for everybody. (#41302, p.4)

Short Length of Program

Participants felt that their involvement in the project had impacted them in many positive ways. It is not surprising then that almost everyone talked about how the program was too short – that they were just beginning to change their lives and progress in their learning in ways that they never had before. Many worried that if the project ended, they would not continue to progress or might even forget or lose what they had acquired:

It's been six months, but when we start, we didn't know, and then suddenly, four or five months later, we starting to pick up, and that's too late, because the project's ending already, so it's so short. That period of time is so short that I can't learn so much. I just started to climb up the ladder, and then, that's it...So isn't that's right? It's kind of like where you're saying, okay, we started to learn, and then months later you starting to pick up and then all of a sudden the class ends, and you're like, wait a minute, the class ending. So it's going to end. I'm not going to climb up anymore. I'm just there at the same level. (#11202, p.12)

But because the class is so short of time, then I feel like I just starting to go up the ladder a little bit, and feel like my heart is saying that, I'm doing a little bit better and then all of a sudden the class ends, so I don't know if I'm going to do well, but I understand a little bit now. (#11402, pp.9-10)

I know that if the program ends and then we don't have class like this again and then you are not coming again, I will probably like going back to square one where I don't know anything, forget everything, and so I do feel kind of bad and very worry about that. And then if you going to have programs like this again in the future, then let me know because I still wanted to learn and come to study. (#41002, p.8)

In fact, one participant wondered why there were not more programs or resources in the United States to assist Hmong people in learning the aspects of American culture and English that they needed:

We have a government out there and they make all the laws, but how come there aren't any money and grant or resources for us to go help us learn the American ways, and the language, so it would be a lot easier for us to live here in this country. I'm not sure why they don't do it for us, but there's so few people, or so few projects like this to help us Hmong people. (#40402, p.13)

In addition to concerns about forgetting what they had learned or having their progress halted, other participants focused on how much they were going to miss the interaction with other group members and the social isolation that might return after the project ended:

When everybody comes back again to study like this, then it will be right because everybody's going to be seeing each other, so that'll be better. So basically, if we don't have the class anymore, then nobody will see anybody and we'll be all alone... I'm very, very happy to come here. And everybody work and everybody has a job and kids, but a couple nights a week, it's not bad because you get to see

everybody, you get to see all the students and I get to see the teachers and tutors and see that everybody's healthy and safe and sound. So it's really good and I'm going to miss you guys and I learned a lot from you and hopefully there will be something like this again so that we all meet again. (#41502, pp.9-10)

Life Stressors Impeding Learning

In addition to Hmong participants' beliefs that the intervention was too short, there was one other major issue that was evident throughout many of the interviews. Despite one of the goals of the project being to reduce participants' distress and stressors in their lives through learning opportunities and the mobilization of community resources to meet their needs, numerous participants expressed high levels of distress, which made their lives difficult and impeded their ability to learn as much as they wanted:

When I feel like when I am stressed out, and I have a lot of pains and worries, then I feel like my heart, it's in a little rock, where I can't express myself, I don't know what to say in English, to express myself. But then I know what to say in Hmong, but I can't express myself. But, when I don't have any worries, then I know, I could feel that, I could express myself, and I could say stuff in English so other people understand how I feel, then it seems like my heart would kind of open up. But then, now that all the worries I have with all the problems I feel like my heart is like a rock, where I can't do anything about it. (#10802, p.3)

Well I feel like there's a lot of worries and stress in my life too. So when I come here to study, I do try to study and I learn stuff here. But then when I go back home, it's kind of hard because all my kids and life there and I tend to think more about the worry stuff and just drop everything about the school here, so when I go home I don't remember stuff. But when I come here, then I pick it up again. You know what I mean is, having a life is kind of hard. You know you have a lot of worries, I mean, you try to do things but I'm always so stressed out with worries about my kids so it's really, really hard for me to focus on school, so I wish I would think better when I'm there but with all the stress and everything, it just makes me so worried that I can't learn anything when I'm at the school here. (#10902, p.2)

These stressors seemed to revolve around several main areas, including work, money, and poor physical health. In addition, however, a great deal of participants' stress seemed to occur because of gendered expectations about their responsibilities to take care

of the children and older family members, and to cook, clean, and garden, which most participants did in addition to working outside the home. Thus, many participants felt weighed down and held back by their many responsibilities in and outside of the home:

But the reason why I have a little problem with this learning is because I have a lot of kids and I work a lot, and I have a lot of stress and worries that I worry about, so then I end up not remembering things like I should. I try to, but then when I go home, I don't keep it, and then when I come here, she [undergraduate] tells me again and I understand it, but with all this stuff, it's worrying me, and I have a lot of stress, so it's kind of hard for me to learn. (#11202, pp.2-3)

I never give time to myself, or make time for myself, because I have so much stuff to do and I always worry about everybody else, and I don't have time for myself. When I'm stuck in the house, I have to worry about the kids, clean up the house, and make food for the family, and then even sometimes send food to my husband at work. And now coming in season where we have to garden, I'm going to have to go garden, and then do the same routine over again. I understand, I try to set up time for myself, but I can never get it because I have so many things to do. (#11202, p.7)

And so when I go, the reason why I don't remember as much is because I have a lot of worries. I have to worry about financially, I have to worry about my kids, and then my family has a sick mother-in-law, so I have to worry about so much stuff. And everything just adds up so it's just so, so stressful for me. (#11402, p.5)

I believe that from going through this class, I feel like I learned more than ever, than I have ever been. But because of my parents, and I have to do things for them, and so that causes a lot of stress and worries that prevent me from studying and learning more. So that's why I think I learned a lot from Matt, but it's just that I have to deal with my Mom and Dad, so I wasn't able to learn as much. (#41401, p.1)

The same participant continues later in the interview:

The biggest thing for me is that I have to take care of my parents because they're both sick, and I can't do anything else, because I have to help them out and take them to the doctor's and then cook for them, and then besides that I go to work and come back home. So I wish there's someone else out there that's going to help me, then it will be a lot easier, but because there's just only one of me and there's two of them that are both sick and so it's hard for me to learn and understand when I go home. I just have all this stress, so I'm not able to learn as much as I think I should...I have like so much more worries, and I feel that I want to go and study and learn more about the English language, especially to get my

citizenship, really study for my citizenship. And I have because all these worries I have for my parents, if it wasn't for them here, I mean I don't mind taking care of them, but if it wasn't for them, then I think I'll be able to learn more and stuff, but because they're still here, and I don't want them to go or die or anything like that, but because I have to take care of them, and so it makes it hard for me to understand and know and learn English, and learn the citizenship testings.

(#41401, p.9)

In conclusion, Hmong participants described many positive ways in which their involvement in the intervention impacted their lives – from acquiring concrete skills and knowledge, improving their access to resources, and increasing their self-sufficiency and self-confidence to breaking down barriers across people of different races and cultures, changing their ideas about what it means to be American, and helping their children. However, most participants agreed that for lasting improvements in their quality of life and learning, the intervention needed to be longer than six months. Finally, it is important to note that many participants continued to experience significant stress, which was not necessarily alleviated by their participation in the intervention and which they felt impeded their ability to fully benefit from it.

Impact on Undergraduates

Given that the intervention was based upon the premise of mutual learning, it is also important to examine the impact the project had on the undergraduates who participated and the relationships that developed among the pairs of undergraduates and Hmong participants who worked together. Undergraduate participants described numerous areas in which the intervention affected them, including acquiring a new understanding of the challenges of being a refugee in the United States, learning about a new culture while simultaneously re-examining their own culture and values, developing

greater self-confidence, making connections with other people, and raising their critical consciousness and awareness about the need for social change.

Understanding the Experience of Being a Refugee/Newcomer to the United States

One of the primary goals of the project for undergraduate students was raising their consciousness and awareness, particularly surrounding issues of privilege, oppression, and the challenges faced by newcomers to the United States. Almost every student seemed to have acquired a new understanding of the experiences of refugees and newcomers. They talked in general about the difficulties and frustrations that refugees face, how their direct experience working with refugees increased their understanding of these challenges, recognition of their own privilege, the strength and resiliency that refugees possess to even make it to the United States, and an increased awareness of society and government's potential roles and responsibility in facilitating the adjustment of refugees.

General difficulties/frustrations. Many students realized for the first time the multiple ways in which adjusting to a new environment with a different language, different cultural norms, and different ways of life can be extremely difficult:

It just helped me to see how frustrating your life can be if you don't know how things work. And I was able to see that being with Chong in her house, just out in the world out here, and at the learning circle, those different environments, just showed me like, I could understand more, how frustrating it can be. Because I would get frustrated with myself, just with the kinds of things that you have to deal with. Like people on the phone or whatever it was. So I think that's a good lesson I learned from being with Chong, is just realizing that, and maybe I'll be able to do something in the future that will be able to help people like Chong and other refugees...Something that could seem so simple like making an appointment can become so difficult, especially if you don't understand the procedure and why you have to do something. And also something simple like, I've taken [Chong's daughter] to the dentist, something simple, that I think is easy for me, because I grew up going to the dentist all the time. But when you're not used to doing that, it can be very confusing. You want to know why something's

going to be done to your mouth, why do you have to go in, why are you doing this, and sometimes it's not even easy when you do speak English to understand what is going on and I definitely learned that too. (#30602, pp.4-5)

As much as I thought I maybe had an idea beforehand about how hard it was, like I think now I have a much better idea of how hard it must be just to come here and not know, just some things, besides not the language, but just not the, like, how kind of deeply embedded, just customs that we take for granted are—we don't really know how we learned, or where we gathered them or how frustrating they are. (#40102, p.4)

I think the most important thing I learned was the things outside the learning circle, that didn't involve just learning English or whatever. Like when we tried to take the bus and that didn't work out, and I think I realized like, even things that are hard for somebody who has lived there all their life, and just dealing with the bureaucracy in some cases, and just things like that. It can be really hard, even for somebody's who's lived here, and then to have to come here and deal with that, and not speak the language or anything. That's got to be so hard. (#40902, p.2)

Direct experience of refugees. Often undergraduates talked about how being a part of Hmong participants' lives made the difference for them in developing a new understanding about the challenges faced by newcomers. Learning in the classroom or reading a book about the experiences of refugees is very different from "being in their shoes:"

I think just when I would try to fill out forms for Lee or when we had to go get something, the process is so long and tedious. And just, I didn't understand a lot of the forms. I can't even imagine going to another country, not really speaking the language or really understanding everything about the language, and trying to get stuff for my family that – I mean, I just can put myself in their shoes and I just think, I don't know, it just kind of, for newcomers, it's just very, very difficult because of the language barrier, I think. And everyone would say, "yeah, okay," but I don't think anyone really knows exactly how difficult it is until they have to go through and see different things that they have to deal with on a day-to-day basis... So I guess I just think it's a very tough experience, or a lot tougher than I thought it was before. (#40202, p.4)

Because it's one thing to read about the struggles, to read stories or personal accounts of fleeing, wherever it is they had to flee, not having food or coming here with nothing, but it's definitely more real when you get to know a family who has been through that. (#41302, p.3)

It makes me feel good and I'm helping her and she's helping me, in learning how – opening my eyes to how it must, how it feels to be foreign in a country you don't know any – pretty much don't know anything about. Yeah, it has to feel really scary at times, and she's opened up my eyes to that. (#41502, pp.1-2)

Recognizing privilege. As many undergraduates began to appreciate and experience the difficulties faced by refugees, they became more aware of their own privileges and the things in their lives that they had always taken for granted:

I learned that it can be very frustrating and discouraging for some people when they first get here and especially if you don't speak the language, whether it's English or wherever other country you go to. I learned that, and I guess I learned that a lot of people in America take things for granted, I think, whether it be transportation or access to food or I don't know, just everyday things that we use, I learned that. Basically, that's what I learned. (#21402, p.9)

I didn't realize how hard it might be. I guess I kind of take for granted like the fact that I can just pick up a phone and call or get information about stuff. And I think that one thing I learned from this project is that it's not that easy for some people. And that I just take it for granted. (#30201, p.3)

I think that a lot of people, Americans, that if you were exposed more to newcomers, that they'd have more of an appreciation just for what we do have. Because I think we tend to see what we don't have, devalue what we have. I tend to value it a lot more through this program. (#30302, p.6)

Well, the most important thing I guess you could say that I learned from Yeng is probably just learning about what her life has been like. And it's given me kind of a great respect for how fortunate I am to have been born in this country. And how hard life is outside of America. As well as like an understanding of how hard it is to try to deal with the red tape of this country, especially if you're not raised here and familiar with it. (#41401, p.2)

Strength and resiliency. Through their recognition of the frustrations and difficulties refugees experience in the United States and their own privilege and advantages, undergraduates also began to appreciate the strength and resiliency of Hmong participants – how they had survived in spite of great hardships. Many students saw their own lives differently because of this awareness and expressed admiration for

the Hmong participants. In addition, they revealed a complex understanding of the many different struggles of refugees and the strength and perseverance it requires to start a new life in the United States:

I think I've learned a lot. I've learned, I think about strength, because, after hearing Bao's stories about Laos and Thailand and everything, and how she came here and then, she's a mother of six children, and all the stuff that she, just like her everyday life, is just amazing that she does so much stuff and she's able to raise six children and take care of her in-laws and be a wonderful mother, and so I think I've learned a lot of stuff, about how a person can be strong, and accomplish a lot of stuff. (#11402, p.2)

And how it's just, it's overwhelming, you come to a place, and they don't really tell you, I guess, the way to do things, and it just, it's so hard just to even, you want to go to the doctor, and, I don't know, it's, I mean I can see how, it's not the same, but how like, my great-grandma came here from another country and didn't speak the language. And it, how hard it was and everything. And, it, I guess, I admire that...and I think a lot of people don't, a lot of Americans don't give newcomers credit. As to like, how much it takes and your family is all the way over in Laos and everything, and you must miss them so much and you just come here, and you don't really know anybody, and you must be so homesick and everything, and everything is so different, and then, your kids don't get the culture that you grew up in, and it must be so frustrating. And then, all the influences, like American culture and everything, and the schools, and maybe intentions that you didn't really have for them when you were in Laos. The things, even sewing, and knowing the language and knowing about the culture and everything and then they come here and then they're just bombarded with, Nike, and whatever. And, I guess, it must be really hard, really hard. And that's why I say I admire her [Hmong participant], like, going through all that, and still being happy and still you know, being so strong. (#20102, p.5)

One of the things I learned is, I kind of got a newfound respect for people that just got here because I see it, I mean, they work, jeez, she [Hmong participant] works all night, she works all day. I mean, I kind of understood how it feels like to be in a new environment when I did my year abroad and I went to other countries where I had no idea how to speak and write the language. But that was to a lesser extent because most people still spoke English. But when they come here, and no one really speaks Hmong, and it's so hard, all the stuff that they do. It really reinforced just how hard that they had to work. And, just, I don't know if I could handle that. (#41202, p.4)

Society's responsibility. Students recognized the strength of Hmong participants, but they also realized that individual perseverance and tenacity can only be successful if

refugees' host country assists newcomers by providing support and assistance.

Undergraduates began to think not only about how refugees adjust as individuals, but also about how the United States could facilitate their transition. Many saw that our country is not necessarily fulfilling this role very well:

I learned that, like I knew a little about what it was like coming to America, just from hearing my relatives tell stories about my grandparents coming and their parents coming. So I knew a little bit, but I guess not really first-hand, as much as I have in this program. And I just, I think it's crazy. I mean, you come here and especially if you're a refugee because if you're just immigrating here that's one thing, but if you can't even go home, you don't have a place to live, and so you come here, and it just seems like the American government should help out more and the American society should help out more and be more accepting of refugees and immigrants both. And it's just, I don't know, it amazes me how difficult it is to come to America, even though we're like the land of the free and everyone's welcome and we have the Statue of Liberty welcoming you when you come. It's like, kind of a joke, because we say we want you but not really, because we treat you like crap once you come. (#11402, p.4)

I guess what I've learned about being a newcomer, is that I really don't think that, I don't know, it seems like you make it more difficult for them than is needed. I know that there's benefits of moving here, and things like that. But I also think that when you, it doesn't need to be as hard as it is. Our society makes it more difficult than necessary. In the workplace, and just through the INS, in the way that everything is so very, very cut and dry and strict. And, just, I just think that to be a little bit more lenient would make things much easier for everybody. Not just you [Hmong participant], but everybody. (#20802, p.4)

I guess I learned a lot, just about some of the odd peculiarities of this country, and how I'm really kind of able to avoid them, as a citizen. But people who come to America are kind of forced to deal with just very odd things. Like aid institutions that are set up to help people, that really end up just kind of causing harm by being very confusing and I guess you could say non-centralized...And, we've been dealing with hospitals and Medicare and Medicaid. And that's just, I think, a small facet of the kind of things you have to deal with when you come to America. And I guess you could say I have a greater appreciation for the absurdity of a lot of things they have to deal with. How they're just really not necessary. Like, forms and processes and steps and rules and sub-rules, and they all just seem to get in the way of accomplishing things with humans. (#41401, p.4)

Cultural Exchange

In addition to new insights about the experiences of refugees and other newcomers in general, undergraduates learned a great deal about Hmong culture and participants' backgrounds and experiences. Similar to Hmong participants, students also had new thoughts about race, diversity within the United States, and breaking down barriers among members of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. For some students, their relationships with Hmong participants forged a connection with other people of color.

Validating and valuing Hmong identity, culture, and experience. Parallel to Hmong participants' perceptions that their experience and knowledge were valued and that their cultural identity as Hmong was recognized, undergraduates talked about their role in these processes:

I think a lot of it just had to do with learning about the Hmong culture, which has to do with being survivors, and overcoming adversity, and just coming to America – their struggle and then trying to survive and live. And I think what I've learned throughout the learning circles, through other people, stuff like that, is that everyone helps each other out. And that's awesome. If everyone could just do that, it'd be great. But the Hmong people just help each other out – no matter if they know who they are or not – they're always just helping each other out. And that's how they survive. And that's awesome, you know, that's something I've learned. (#40202, p.3)

If anything, I now know who Hmong people are. I never knew anything about Hmong people. It's amazing that there are so many Hmong in America, and most Americans don't know, or there's no way to educate Americans about it, different people that come and go through the U.S. really. In that case, it's been really educational. (#40402, p.3)

I guess it's a whole wide cultural thing, I guess it's not anything in specific, it's just like this new, I didn't even know, I'm sorry to say, but I didn't even know that there was a Hmong culture before this whole experience, but I'm very interested in it, and I thought that was really educational...And I would say the other thing that was really touching to me was, I don't know what his name is, but he [Hmong participant] was speaking about his experience in the war, and I thought that was really cool. I had no idea, and like I said before this class, I

didn't even know about the whole experience and everything, and I thought it was really interesting to hear it from the first person point of view. (#40802, pp.4-5)

At the same time most undergraduates were learning about Hmong people for the first time, they were also discovering the important lesson that there was diversity within the Hmong culture – that not all people can be understood by knowing something about their culture.

Recognizing, not that I was consciously thinking these are all people from the same ethnicity, they're all refugees, therefore they all have the same problems, but really realizing the difference in the problems that everybody was having and how completely different – like I expected our relationships to be a lot more similar than they actually were. (#40701, p.7)

In addition, working closely with people of another culture gave some undergraduates insight into the ways in which individuals' cultures shape their worldview and the assumptions that we often make when embedded within our own cultural contexts:

Getting to know Ma just kind of makes me realize how much of a different perspective, what I mean is the way I see the world is, I mean is just one way, but the way Ma sees the world is just or the way she goes about her day is just, it kind of reminds me that, in a way, that there's, I don't know if this makes sense, but there's just thousands of ways to go about life and do things in general that, I don't know, maybe not be as quick to make assumptions. I think I'm pretty good about not doing that with people in general, but without a program like this a lot of us would never get an opportunity to meet anybody here. (#30302, p.3)

Diversity within the United States and American cultures. Depending upon their background, some undergraduates recognized the diversity within the United States for the first time:

I think a lot of the time I learned things through discussion, like how different we really are, like how diverse the city really is. Like some of the things we think and some of the things the Hmong believe are totally different and it's good to see that in the community. And it's good to see that you can preserve your culture in the United States even though it's so big and fast. But I guess the main thing it's taught me is how diverse everything is here. Like before I really didn't think it

was possible to preserve a culture in the United States without being influenced, but I mean to some extent, I've learned that you can by the group and stuff. (#20601, p.4)

I just met a lot of people with a lot of different, maybe thoughts about how things are, and then questions about them, and just a range of totally different things, like citizenship questions to, there would be, I don't remember what it was but about, eating people, or something, or just like that. (#40502, p.2)

Other students felt they had contributed to helping other group members become aware of the diversity of Americans:

As far as the group goes, maybe I've gotten rid of some of the stereotypes they've had of Americans. I'm not sure necessarily what that might be but there's certain stereotypes people have of Americans, I guess you could say. I'm not Christian, I'm small, I'm not, just that America's not a homogeneous society and hopefully that I've – not that Christian, tall, blond is bad or anything, but maybe just that I've made them see whatever stereotypes they might have had. Not necessarily bad, just you know what I mean? Maybe changed some of their perceptions of Americans. (#41302, p.5)

Race: Breaking down barriers and recognizing similarities. Beyond learning about the Hmong people and appreciating their culture, many undergraduates began to recognize their shared humanity and broke down racial and ethnic barriers. This was particularly true for some white students who had not interacted extensively with people of races, ethnicities or cultures different from their own:

I learned how to do all of this learning and everything and have fun with it. It doesn't have to be so serious, and I think we all learn from each other, like everyone's different backgrounds, and just kind of showing that everyone's alike, when compared with the basics of Hmong culture and American culture, and you get all the whatever away, and then you know we're all the same...(#20102, p.3)

I think the most important thing that I learned between the three of us is that all different types of cultures can get along, really, really, easily, and I think a lot of people don't realize that. And they, more or less, just avoid it at all costs, especially in America. And I think that with the program, and everyone else involved with the program, we've all just learned to work with one another. I've never seen anyone get frustrated with the course or with other people, Hmong people getting frustrated with American people, or vice versa. None of that

existed in my eyes, from what I saw. So, I just think that the most important thing that I learned was basically that people can get along really easily. (#21402, p.5)

Their family likes the same kind of things that I like to do, like I'm thinking of when we went to Fenner Nature Center, that park the other day, they absolutely loved walking through the woods. And, it's stuff that I would do with my family when I was little, so I mean, there was a lot of, even though there are a lot of differences, there are still a lot of similarities. (#30602, p.9)

One participant also described her new understanding about the work required to break down barriers and learn about others' cultures – that it requires forming relationships and engaging with other people rather than waiting for them to “teach” you about their lives:

I learned how you shouldn't just expect someone to be able to teach their culture to you, you know what I mean? Or that they're even going to see the things in their culture that you see, or that they see as worthwhile teaching. And because, just for example, well with [Hmong participants' children] being so shy, or actually all of them being so shy, that I learned a lot about how to ask the right questions, instead of just saying a question that you'd think, well it makes sense to me that they would give me this information, you know what I mean? And being able to read people a little better. I feel I can, with True [Hmong participant], I can sense more when she's having a bad day or when she's confused about something, than I did at the beginning. Like being able to read people a little better and being able to read people that are from a different culture too. Cause obviously Hmong body language can be a lot different than American body language. (#40701, pp.11-12)

Bond among members of marginalized cultures. Whereas white students tended to have a new awareness of the diversity within the United States and the possibilities of diminishing certain barriers among people of different races and cultures, students of color often saw new parallels or bonds with the Hmong as members of another marginalized culture:

I think the coolest thing was learning about how similar the Hmong culture is to my family's culture [Mexican American]. I don't know if it was the most important thing, but it was the most interesting thing that I think that I got to see, just because we're so similar, being so far away from my family. Again, that's really important to me. A lot of things that are important to people in my culture are important to Hmong culture as well, so it's really cool seeing the comparison to-I feel closer to Hmong people than a lot of people just because of that

reason.... They have a lot bigger families, and we have bigger families, and, they get together more often than other families I think in the United States. Especially at school, a lot of people, they don't understand why I'm so close, or why I go home to see my family a lot, but why we get together for a little kid's birthday or something. And they do a lot of the same things, like they get together to help people who are sick or to help each other out or to throw a party for somebody. It's just, I don't know, they're really close. (#30402, pp.4-5)

And I thought it was interesting too how the Hmong religion is real similar to Native American religion and medicine and Shamanism, and it's almost like very common to like almost all, seems like all tribal people...So that was interesting. (#40402, p.6)

Later in the interview, the undergraduate continued by talking about sharing an additional common bond with many Hmong people of not being recognized for who you really are:

I'm sure the Hmong population in Michigan is probably just almost similar to the Native American population...it's like, when people see Native Americans, they think they're Hispanic. Or they have so little blood quantum they think they're white. There's some Native Americans who are quarter, and they look white, but they consider themselves Indians. It's kind of insulting when you don't get recognized for who you are. (#40402, p.14)

Connections with Other People

Some undergraduates focused not only on what they had learned from the Hmong participants and other students but also on the relationships and connections they had formed with others through their involvement in the project:

And just cause of the class, the way it is, I mean most classes we have aren't so involved. I mean, you get to know people, but not like this class. You really get to kind of get a feel for where they came from and what their lives involve and I think that was kind of a good thing too. And just in general get an idea of what all these other students at MSU are about, because there's a lot of diversity just in that, and I think that's one positive experience and just even from again, from the other students. Seeing where they came from, how they got to this point is interesting, to see how, it's good to hear that other people have 1.6 on their Freshman grades too (#30302, p.4)

I guess the best thing would just be the opportunity to meet new friends and new people and establish new relationships. [To] be put in a situation where you can meet new people, and it's not so random, all of us coming together on Tuesdays

and Thursdays. You get to be around the same people, and I don't know, you can't help but get to know them. So that was, I think, the best. (#40502, p.8)

Self-Confidence

Through learning about others' experiences as refugees, gaining exposure to different cultures and values, and forming new relationships, many undergraduates observed changes in themselves. For some, they acquired new confidence in themselves and their abilities:

I always wanted to help somebody learn something. But at the same time, I wanted to learn something for myself too. Before this project I didn't really have much confidence in myself, and then I decide to get involved in this project just to make myself feel better about myself too. (#10802, p.2)

Jennifer continues later in the interview:

She [Hmong participant] might think that I'm used to calling the doctor's office and making appointment and stuff like that, but I had never done anything like that, even just for myself before this project started. So that's something that I learned. I never used to do that... I used to avoid the situation where I have to do it. But now I'm used to doing it, and then just by doing it, I got confidence in myself, I guess, you know? I've proved myself that I can do anything just by myself. (#10802, p.8)

Another undergraduate commented:

And also, through See [Hmong participant], I've built a lot more confidence through myself. Like when she comes to classes she knows the flash cards and she can read the sentences and she's writing and everything, just because it, she didn't know before and, it's just, I've never taught anybody these things before and I didn't even know these questions either, and, I'm learning them and she's learning them, just the fact that she's remembering them. It's just giving me a lot more confidence...(#11202, p.4)

Suzanne continues later in the interview:

A big thing that I got out of this, just I have a lot more confidence in the dealing with people every day. It just makes me want to be a better person, just dealing with people on the phone and how they don't call you back, and how, being on hold for like twenty minutes...when I'm at work, I'm just like, "Hi—can I do that right now?" I'm just, it really made me realize, that, being in those shoes, that I never really thought, like when I'm at work, we'll leave people on hold for

awhile, walk around, talk to my friends, and like, oh yeah. I'm much more persistent and much more like, we have to get this done... (#11202, p.8)

Rethinking Values

For other undergraduates, the changes they described in themselves involved rethinking their values and transforming their perspectives, attitudes, worldviews, and priorities.

Family. After surviving extensive trauma or loss, many people re-evaluate their priorities and emphasize family and loved ones above other concerns. This is often true for refugees. For the Hmong in particular, this may complement their existing cultural focus on the importance of children and family. Many undergraduate participants seemed to acquire a new perspective on family and what kinds of families they envisioned for themselves:

The one thing that I've learned probably the most from Lee would have been that, it doesn't matter what you have. It doesn't, to be happy. Lee is always smiling. Always, like, she's such a happy person because she fills her life with amazing children and family, and she has such a tight family. And that's what makes her happy. And if I could only be so lucky to have the same life, that's what I've learned – to strive for surrounding myself with people that I love and not really surrounding myself with all this material stuff. (#40202, pp.2-3)

Well, I think seeing her [Hmong participant] with her kids and everything and, I mean, because I didn't have any brothers or sisters, and I don't really, coming from a one-parent home and everything like that, and just to see a normal family, with so much love and everything, and it just like fascinates me and everything, and I think I learned, she's a great role model for me when I want to be a Mom. (#20201, p.2)

And also just about the way her [Hmong participant's] family works together and shares together, and it's kind of organized in such a way that they kind of help each other. And everything always moves—it seems like everyone is really polite in her whole family and it's really nice and they all work together I think. (#40102, p.2)

Helping others. For some undergraduates, what they learned from Hmong

participants extended beyond family to helping and caring for others more generally:

I think the most valuable thing I've learned from Mai Houa is that no matter how busy or how worried she is about something, she always takes time to take care of everybody else. She always makes sure that everybody's okay, especially people who are sick, even if they're not in the family. She takes care of them, makes sure that they're okay, and their family is okay. Even though she has so much on her mind and she's worried about other things, she thinks about other people first. That's really admirable. (#30402, p.3)

Jackie continues later in the interview:

I just feel like at college you just get so busy and crazy and stuff, and you don't even, it something you don't want to, but you just don't think of other people, when you're that busy. And I think, Mai Houa didn't teach me like sit me down and teach me something specific, she taught me by the way that she is and how the way that she acts towards other people, how she helps other people. I think that's the most important thing, how she's taught me how to be, even if you're really busy, even if things get really crazy, there's other people who are feeling the same way who need, they really need your help, and stuff. So I think that's the most important thing that she's taught me. (#30402, p.7)

Persistence/Optimism. Many students also mentioned learning about Hmong

participants' persistence and optimism in the face of adversity and how this made them

re-think their own attitudes and actions:

I guess what really stands out in my mind is probably Xue's dedication to her studies, like citizenship and the material, but not really going overboard and getting too stressed out about it, but still laughing and having a good time, but still managing to keep stabbing away at the questions and the material, and she's very busy. It just shows kind of like, the first-hand experience of somebody else, showing how much they cared about getting something done, how much effort they were willing to put forth to accomplish it. (#40502, p.2)

And then, just Pao in general, her being sick and stuff, really taught me a lot, because she's a very strong person to be able to be in the hospital for that long, and stay, keep hope and stuff, and I just think that that taught me a lot right there, too. And being able to just do stuff with her and really made me feel better, and I hope it helped her. I just think that she's such a strong person and that really taught me a lot. (#30201, p.5)

But also not just struggling through learning how to study for a test that you don't understand the language of, but True's whole life experience and knowing about that. I don't know if I would say teaching, but like in a way, inspired an attitude in me kind of thing. Cause it's just the same thing with [True's son] too; both of them taught me how to deal with hardships and problems that you're having. Like we'll be studying something and True won't get it but it's not just she, well she's harsh on herself, but she doesn't just stop there. She's very harsh on herself, but she doesn't stop studying because of it, you know what I mean? Where a lot of us, we sit there and think, "Well I'm never going to get this." And so we just stop doing it. But she, her determination has been really inspiring to me. And kind of made me rethink a lot of things I think I can't do. (#40701, p.6)

I'm pretty sure most of the Hmong ladies we have been working with have some problems, some people not as many problems as the others have, but most of them have some problems. And even though they have problems, they are still optimistic. They are not negative. And then, I thought it's really, really important and compared to their problems, my problems or worries are not really important. But I used to be so negative about myself and then I used to avoid the situation where I don't have to speak in front of people or even don't have to speak English much. But ever since I got involved in this project, I started realizing that it's so important to be positive about what you do and about your goals and stuff. I learned from her and the other Hmong ladies that it's so important to be positive. (#10802, p.5)

Worldview. In an even broader sense, many undergraduates talked about how their involvement in the project shaped their perspectives on life and future goals. Some undergraduates focused primarily on how their worldview had been broadened:

I think that I learned a lot, but like Phia was saying, you can't really specify exactly what it was because there was so much, and they were more like realizations – like you got to see things through a different perspective and once you've seen them like that, there wasn't really any way to go back to how you'd seen them before. So, it's like, the whole time you just started to change – so you learn, and then you learn about yourself and learn about the society and then you probably learn something new so, yeah, you learn a lot. (#20601, p.8)

I'm from a kind of sheltered environment, private schools, and whatnot. And it helped – all the different people, it helped me to open up and look at things from not just the conservative Republican point of view, but just trying to take in all the different perspectives people have... I've always been a closed-minded person, I mean, not too bad, but I mean, I've got my ways, and I think that's right, no matter what. But, it helped, it really helped a lot, to see and just to listen to other peoples' experiences kind of reinforced their thoughts. Like, it's one thing to hear someone say something, but then, when you have to go to their house and you see it, it makes a lot bigger impact. (#41202, p.3)

Because she's [Hmong participant] my age, and she's a wife and a mother and that really made me have a different perspective on things because I still think of myself as a kid and I just want to go out and party and stuff, and it's really, it's different for me to see someone so young having this kind of a lifestyle, whereas, I'm not even thinking about that yet. And I think that's really, respectable, because I just, I don't even think about the future really at this point. I'm just worried about getting stuff done now. So it's different for me. (#40902, p.4)

Other undergraduate participants talked about concrete ways they planned to change their lives or goals because of their new perspectives:

It's just the whole project has been such a big part of the year for me, and it's just such an important year for me in school. It's kind of like a turning point where I have to figure out what I'm going to do and stuff like that. And it's been such a turning point for me because, before the project, I started slipping into that whole, "I need to get a job with really good money and da ta da ta da. I want to be an I/O [Industrial/Organizational] psychologist. Whatever." But just being a part of the project and working with people and working with Lee and her family, I realized that that's what I want to do. I want to work with people. I don't want to work with numbers; I don't want to sell stuff to people. I want to work with people and relate to people and learn from people. And that's, I think, priceless when it comes to learning something from a project like this. (#40202, p.7)

But I guess the biggest thing I learned, the most valuable experience out of this was just the fact that of how much that I need to work on, just in general being more of a listener, more of a, just a better person in general as far as helping out. I mean I want to go into education and the program has made me realize that there is always so much more that you can improve on.... It's something I've learned, to be more open-minded and patient and not have, I guess, too high expectations but just have realistic expectations. I think I've learned from the program to cut myself a little bit of slack on occasion. Because things don't always go the way you planned, or anything like that, but that, in a way that can be okay. (#30302, p.2)

Understanding Project Goals

Finally, it is important to highlight some of the ways in which undergraduates demonstrated their understanding of several of the project's fundamental goals, including: creating an environment of mutual learning in which no one is considered an expert except on her own life, and working towards system-change.

No expert/mutual learning. Many students understood that refugees and other newcomers have knowledge and skills that can make important contributions to the United States and that the undergraduates learned as much if not more than the Hmong participants in the project:

The initial interaction between Lee and myself, just sharing ourselves with each other and learning from each other, she was definitely not the only one learning the whole time. (#40202, p.2)

I think in a lot of ways it's exceeded my expectations, because when it started, I was like, well I don't know if this is going to work, because we all sat in this big room looking at each other, like I don't know if this is ever going to happen. And I feel like I've established quite a good relationship back and forth, and, I don't know, I think I've gained a lot from it. It's been a lot—it's been a big time commitment, which has been hard, but it's been really nice. I've enjoyed the whole thing, and I think I've learned just as much as she has if not more. (#40802, p.3)

At the same time, there were specific skills and knowledge that Hmong participants had joined the project in order to acquire and undergraduates were aware that their role was to facilitate this process:

I think another thing is maybe not to look at me as a teacher. And I think I tried to maybe show that to you as, like I'm not a teacher, it's kind of like what you wanted to do, and I kind of went along with that, instead of separating us...I'm called a facilitator, a helper. Not a teacher. She's learning it all. It's all her. It's all. And I'm just helping. So that's why I say it's not because of me being smart, it's because of her being smart. (#20102, pp. 9-10)

Some undergraduates had new realizations about their limitations in only being able to speak English. One undergraduate explained how learning each other's languages should be a mutual endeavor:

I think a lot of people look at people that can't speak English that are in America, as if they have the deficit, that they're the ones that can't speak English, so they must be worse off, but it's just as much the people that can speak English and can't speak their language that have the deficit. (#11402, p.12)

Related to the concept of mutual learning is the idea that learning needs to be based upon the interests and experiences of the learner:

I think you gotta focus more on what they want to learn so they have the drive to do it. And usually most of the times I've tried to do something that isn't too exciting or related to anything, they usually just flop right then and there and nobody learns anything and it kind of stalls the process for what we could have learned. So I mean, I kind of felt that I learned a lot about paying close attention, like focusing in on their interests before you even really start to teach. (#20601, pp.2-3)

System-change. A second important goal of the project was to encourage all participants to see the ways in which our lives and the well-being of individuals and communities are affected by our social realities and the contexts in which we live. With this awareness often comes the realization that peoples' lives cannot improve without transforming the systems that affect them:

I think there's a system that's there that tries to help people, but there definitely needs things done to the system to change it because it's not 100%, not even 50% right. (#40202, p.4)

Michael continues later in the interview:

...or how the system works. Like, how there's always going to be people that have a bunch of stuff, and there's going to be people all the time that don't have a bunch of stuff. (#40202, p.8)

First, it's really hard to work with the system and I got to see that firsthand. They either just push you along and don't really listen to what you have to say or they just kind of pass you off to somebody else and keep passing you around the office. And I got to see what an important role the children play once they come over here. Cause it's the first generation here and they're the ones that kind of gotta bear most of the weight of the two cultures. So, between those two, I got a pretty good taste of reality, what it's like to come over here. That and how confusing it is to understand everything and everybody. (#20601, p.5)

I think that it made me see that our government makes decisions, and then they make the decisions for the American people, but then they don't have the money to do what they're trying to do. So there should be more money to help Hmong people to learn the culture better, to learn more about American way of life, learn about English, to help them feel at home here. And there should be more

resources and I guess that's what I've learned, because if this program is the only program, then it seems like there's not enough contact between the resources and the people that need the resources. (#40402, p.13)

I was going to say the same discussion, union one, that was very interesting to hear everyone's different stories about workplace experiences. It really kind of gave me an idea of how people are exploited in this country, especially if they're coming from a place where they're already at a disadvantage. Employers just seem to feed on that, and encourage their subservience, to keep them there. That's what I saw. I kind of already had that idea, but that discussion really gave me a lot more evidence on it. (#41401, p.3)

Part of advocacy and working towards changing the system is the realization that change does not occur without initiative and the commitment required to follow through:

I can't sit back and just kind of expect things to fall into place. I've got to go out and make sure, and kind of set things in motion myself. And kind of guide them along. Because, that's something that really kicked in towards the end, because I had to go to speak to Mr. Smith [one of the Nhia's children's school counselor], to doctors, picking people up, that—it's not going to happen unless you really make sure that it happens. (#41202, p.2)

Patrick continues later in the interview:

Cause actually at first, I thought, can't we miss two learning circles or whatnot, I thought it was harsh. But then I realized, that that's what she needs. I mean, my other classes they don't take attendance, and how often do I go? But I thought that actually turned out to be a very, very good idea. I mean, kids may gripe, but it got them here, and that's how they got the job done. (#41202, p.7)

Rewarding Experience

Overall, many undergraduates talked about how participating in the project was rewarding and worthwhile. These sentiments did not necessarily include specifics, but instead were general expressions of what the project had meant to them:

I would just say although it was hard to get everything in sometimes, this was one of the most rewarding things that I did when I was at college, and I'm really glad that I had the chance to take part in it. I really thought it was a good experience all the way around. (#40802, p.12)

One good thing is it was definitely probably the most rewarding class that I've had at MSU. Because you have hands-on experience and you're actually going

out and doing something, so it was probably the coolest class I've had. So it was good. Overall, I think it was very, very rewarding. (#30602, p.12)

This is probably going to sound funny, but I've done a lot of other volunteer work and even tutoring and different things like that, and everything else has sometimes gotten to a point where like, "Oh, I have to do this." And this is always like, I want to. So I think that was a really good thing, because I never really felt like, "Oh I have to go in the class," or "Oh, I have to go do this." It was always something that I looked forward to. Where my life is so crazy with school and everything, and this is always like, "Oh I get to go to class now." Which is a lot different from my other, some of my other classes, too. So I think that was a really good thing. (#11402, p.10)

It's definitely a lot more fulfilling, I guess you could say, than a normal class where you just sit and read books, and it's definitely something that I'll remember a lot longer a lot of other classes I've had. (#41302, p.8)

One student went even further to express the hope for the world that the project gave her:

I think as a group, I think that when you turn on the TV the world just seems like it's just getting worse and worse, like there's bombs and now we're in a fight with China, and just wars and everything, and I think little things like this [project] make it seem like it's a better place. (#11202, p.5)

Short Length of Intervention

Although it was not as widespread a comment among undergraduates as among

Hmong participants, several students mentioned that they thought the project was too short:

The length of it came and went pretty fast. But it seems to be a lot of people are on a roll right now with getting the learning going and stuff, and then now it's come to a halt. So if, I guess just maybe the length. Maybe a two-year commitment or something of some sort...(#21402, p.17)

I just think the time, I wish there was more time. That's what I didn't expect – that it was going to go by so quickly. Because it just seems like we just started. And there's so much more that we should be able to do... (#40202, p.2)

In sum, similar to the Hmong participants, the undergraduate participants expressed numerous ways in which they were deeply impacted by their participation in the intervention. As they learned more about the experiences of refugees and the

community and world in which they lived, they became more aware of the challenges and difficulties faced by newcomers to the United States and the strength and determination required to survive within a society that often places further barriers in peoples' paths. Through this heightened awareness, undergraduate participants also acquired new insight into themselves, their social locations and privilege, and their goals and values.

Relationship Between Hmong Participants and Undergraduates

Examining the impacts of the intervention on Hmong participants and undergraduates was important. However it is also instructive to explore the process of the intervention, in particular, what it was like for Hmong participants and undergraduates to work together. In this section comments from both Hmong participants and undergraduates are grouped around several themes: the language barrier, the importance of one-on-one relationships, and the types of relationship formed among pairs.²¹

Language Barrier

The most salient process issue for most participants was the language barrier they experienced. The two bilingual co-facilitators were available to interpret during the discussion time in the learning circles and on an as-needed basis during one-on-one learning and outside of the learning circles, but the majority of participants' interactions occurred without them. Participants talked in general about the difficulties the language barrier imposed, how it impeded them from fully expressing themselves to each other, how they had to often rely on others to facilitate their communication, and finally, how they worked to transcend the language barrier.

²¹ Because Hmong and undergraduate pairs share id numbers, quotes in this section are distinguished by an H for Hmong participant or a U for undergraduate participant.

General difficulties. The language barrier was a significant challenge as participants worked to get to know each other and engage in advocacy and learning together:

It's very hard, to me it's hard because – for the language and then not understand the language and not knowing how to speak fluently yet. So, sometimes when Rachel come to my house, and then we have a hard time trying to understand each other because I think sometimes we do have a hard time to understand each other. And then that's still probably the hardest time for me. (#41002H, p.3)

The hardest thing was probably just not being able to speak with her like this, one-on-one without a translator, because I want to so bad, but I'm not able to and so that's probably one of the hardest things was just the communication. (#30602U, p.9)

The most difficult part about us working together, is that I want to say something to her and I want to tell her something, but then when she tells me something, I don't understand, so I just leave it at that. And that's the worst part about it. I mean, I want to do things with her and go out with her, but then if I do things, it won't be that fun because I don't know how to respond back to her or understand her, so that's the hard part about it. (#40902H, p.6)

Desire to fully express self. Several Hmong participants talked specifically about how frustrating it was not to be able to tell their partner exactly how they felt or about important events in their lives:

I want to talk to her, but I can't really say what I feel to her. But if I know the English, then I'll talk to her all day and tell her everything, and tell her really how I feel and all... (#11202H, p.7)

So then when I put the video of the war in Long Cheng [in Laos] for you to watch, Mark, I feel like, okay, you know it, but then I don't know how to say to you and I know that you already know about the video, but I don't know how to explain it to you. I'm very, very sorry that, I'm brokenhearted that I can't explain it to you, and I want to, but I can't. (#21401H, p.12)

The hard part is that I can think about all the stuff to say back to you, Joanna, but I can't tell you. I really, really want to tell you everything, but I can't. (#41501H, p.8)

Reliance on others. Many participants mentioned having to rely on others to interpret for them, whether it be their children or the project co-facilitators:

It's very hard because for me to not understand what Josh said and then for Josh not to understand what I said and not knowing what other peoples are said. And so every time we try to say something or to try to talk about something, we still need a translator. So it's very hard. (#20601H, p.1)

Whenever that my kids are around, and then if I don't understand you then they can translate but when just you and me, then it makes it hard because then I don't understand what you say and then you probably don't understand what I say, so I feel like that's the most difficult time. (#20802H, p.8)

The hardest part is the language difficulty. It's hard sometimes when I want to talk to just Mai Houa, but I can't, I need to have one of the kids there to translate. Sometimes that's hard but we manage. (#30402U, p.10)

Transcending the language barrier. On the other hand, several participants talked about how they had been able to work towards decreasing their reliance on translators and transcending the language barrier by using creative communication techniques. In addition, many Hmong participants' English proficiency improved throughout the duration of the intervention, which further facilitated communication.

The communication between the two of us, just trying to communicate back and forth, and I know back in the beginning it was a lot harder than it is now. Now we can practically have a whole conversation and not have to worry about getting someone to translate because we're able to understand each other enough now, but in the beginning, and I think that's probably because she's gotten so much better in English, but I think it was a lot harder in the beginning to communicate. And I think phone communication is very, very difficult because you can't look at each other, and when you look, when you see each other, you can kind of use gestures or whatever and it helps to understand it. (#11402U, p.10)

What was the most difficult thing? Was the language barrier, but that didn't make me frustrated or want to give up. It just kind of made me want to just look past that and just try the best between Pang and I and Pheng to communicate whether it be through pointing to things or just hand gestures. (#21402U, p.13)

She [undergraduate] was able to explain everything to me to make me understand. My kids can't even do that. Even though we speak the same language, they can't

even have the skill to do that, and that's what really impressed me. (#40701H, p.13)

Importance of One-on-One Learning/Relationship

Many participants talked about the value of working consistently and one-on-one with the same person throughout the six months of the intervention. This was important because it helped establish comfort and trust among pairs, which is particularly important for new learners:

If I have one-on-one then I'll be able to learn. Because with the Hmong people, it's kind of hard to learn in a group, so and [we] get all embarrassed and stuff, so it's a good thing that I did get to have a student for myself. (#11202H, p.3)

And also one of the things that I learned from was that I know Sara so well that she's not criticize me in the way I speak. Because I know that most of time when, I know the way I talk it doesn't make sense most of the time, but she doesn't criticize me that. And that's one of the things that make me feel more comfortable talking...than where other people, when you go to different school, different class, when you talk and then people will start to say what you say is wrong. You know, it shouldn't say it this way, that way. And that way then, I get more embarrassed, and then I get more hesitate, I don't wanted to speak up. But this program, I felt more comfortable. You know like we are just friend, and then that makes me feel more confidence by just talking. (#20102H, p.10)

The best thing about this, it would be between me and her, when she's teaching is, it's been six month or so and she taught me a lot of stuff. The first time that we sat down, and she was teaching me, I didn't really learned that much. But as time goes by, I got to learn more because she taught me more, and then from then on, I understand more, and so I learned a lot more when a person's teaching me, so then that's really helpful, when the person teaches for a long time instead of like a short period of time. (#40802H, p.8)

The one-on-one relationships also enabled Hmong participants to learn what they wanted to learn at their own pace:

Well, it has helped me a lot. It met my expectations because right now I just study for the citizenship questions, but since it's one-on-one person, Michael was able to explain to me things that I didn't understand before and because of that, I was be able to catch on better than going to a big class because then I was able to understand things that I never know before or words that I haven't see before that

Michael was able to explain to me to make me understand it. So it's very helpful. (#40202H, p.2)

I like doing this better. One-on-one it's better than one teacher with the whole class. Because then she just say whatever that she says to the whole class. And she doesn't have really have time to pay attention on you, even though you don't understand. (#40701H, p.18)

Undergraduate participants agreed:

I think it was good how, unlike just a regular classroom where everybody's learning the same thing at the same time, whereas with this set-up in the learning circles, people can work on what they want to and at their own pace, and I think that, they can learn a lot that way. (#40902U, p.10)

Type of Relationship Established

Each pair of Hmong participant and undergraduate was unique and worked differently together. Because participants chose their own partners, they seemed to be matched with people who had similar personalities and learning styles to themselves. Although participants did not discuss their relationships in great detail in the interviews, they made certain comments that indicated the different types of relationships that were formed. For instance, some Hmong participants had a more one-sided perception of the relationship, while others related more to their undergraduate as a friend or, in some cases, a family member.

Unequal. Some Hmong participants seemed to experience the relationship between themselves and their undergraduate as unequal, which in some ways it was. It is important to be aware of the power differences inherent within the structure of the intervention: the undergraduate's role was to engage in advocacy and learning with the Hmong participant. The intervention was directed by each Hmong participant and her goals and interests, but the undergraduate possessed the skills, knowledge, and training that the Hmong participant often needed, and furthermore, the undergraduates were

native English speakers and Americans (except for one international student from Japan).

Thus, despite the fact that undergraduates did learn a great deal from the Hmong participants, some Hmong participants did not feel as though this were the case:

I feel that maybe you learned about the Hmong ways of culture, especially how they live their life and how everything goes around, just what we do, everyday life. And especially with me, my experience, you see that when I'm pregnant and I have the baby, we have to stay home for a month, and so you probably learned that. But I don't think I taught you anything else because I learned more from you, because you know the English, and you know how to read and write, and so I think I learned more from you than you learned from me. (#40902H, p.4)

I don't think that I ever taught Lucy anything, except I only learned from Lucy. (#41101H, p.3)

Well the most important things that I taught Patrick, I don't know because it's always Patrick teaching me all this stuff, so I'm not really sure. (#41202H, p.4)

One participant described specifically the inequality inherent in the structure of the program:

I know that Jennifer's been with me for a while, and she understand how I feel and how my life's been like, but it's that separation that she is here to help me out and I'm here with my family, so I know she knows what's going on in my family, but the thing was, I know she knows, but she doesn't want to say it. And then me, I don't want to say it to her and tell her all my problems so it would, but we know, we both, I know that we both know that we know each other's problems, but she knows more about mine. (#10802H, p.3)

Friendship. On the other hand, many Hmong participants and undergraduates talked about the friendships they had established, and, in some cases, how this made them feel more like equals, rather than just a one-sided helping relationship:

Because before we didn't know each other, and since we became friends—we know each other, became friend, and then we became so close...(#20102H, p.2)

I learned that even though we sometimes have communication differences or problems, I'm not sure, and sometimes we don't understand each other, we have built a friendship that is very welcoming, very exciting to me. (#41502U, p.3)

I'm really glad that I decided to, I don't really feel like it's a project, you don't feel like, it's, it's a weird thing. All the behind-the-scene stuff, but I don't really feel like I'm helping, and teaching, not in a bad way, but I just feel like I'm helping out a friend. It doesn't have that feeling that it's a project and that it's really structured in that way. It's more laid back – that kind of feeling. So it's been really good and I'm really happy that I got to meet all these people—really, really. It's been fun, a lot of fun. (#30402U, p.11)

At first it was kind of like a self-confidence thing, where, because I don't know her [undergraduate], she doesn't know me, so it's really hard for me, just try to express myself, and say some English words to her, but as time went by, we became friends and we got to know each other so it was a lot easier for us to talk to each other, and I understand her a lot more afterward. (#10802H, p.4)

Family. Some pairs described the bond they established between each other as feeling like they were so close that they considered the other as family:

And my kids, they know Sara, so they don't get hesitant to ask Sara to do anything or they are not shy and then they just feel like she's part of the family, and then whatever they need, they always wanted to call Sara and ask, so I just feel like she's not just a teacher, but she's part of my family. (#20102H, pp.5-6)

The way my expectations were exceeded is I did a lot more than just teach and work on school and things, but meeting her family, and I think that was the best part about this program is just watching Hmong movies and eating Hmong food, and hanging out with the kids and hanging out at Mai Houa's house. I think that was my favorite part of the whole program and it definitely exceeded my expectations in that way, where I got to be a part of their family, because I'm so far away from my family, so I felt like they almost kind of took me in as one of their family members which was really nice. (#30402U, p.2)

Interestingly, several participants talked about forming a mother/daughter-type relationship, which may be related both to the closeness they felt to each other and to their age differences and particular stages of life:

I'm happy that you are my teacher, and then to me, it is like you are my oldest daughter. (#30402H, p.3)

And also one of the thing is good is that, when I get to know her, she is like one of my daughter, she is like my friend and my daughter as well, so, that's the best thing that happened to me. (#30602H, p.9)

They just feel like my family too, it's just, I call Chong my mom, she's like a mom to me too, so I didn't really expect that we'd get that close, but we did and so that was something that was kind of exciting. (#30602U, p.3)

One Hmong participant expressed the closeness she felt to her undergraduate in terms of her concern about her rather than with the use of the word family:

Well, I heard about that your parents are separated, and they remarried and everything. And I care about you a lot and I'm very concerned about that. And then I feel so sad about that. But there's one thing that I'm just going to say is, when you go get married, try to make your life better. And then hopefully you will end up with just one husband, and so your kids won't have to go through the same thing that you go through and I feel so sad for it. And I wish that I can do something for you, but all I can say is just the word, and I can't really do anything to help you physically, but I do care about you a lot. (#40102H, pp.8-9)

In sum, participants' descriptions of their relationships with their partners revealed that different relationships emerged among the 27 pairs. Some tended to feel unbalanced in terms of who was doing the helping and/or learning, while others emphasized the friendships they had developed or even closer bonds they characterized as family-like. However, consistent across participants were discussions of the challenges of overcoming the language barrier (which existed to different degrees among different pairs) and the value of the one-on-one relationship that the structure of the program encouraged.

Suggestions for Improvements

Overall, both Hmong and undergraduate participants were satisfied with the intervention. Ninety-two percent of Hmong participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the project overall. An even greater number (96%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the learning circles; the same percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their undergraduate partner. Among undergraduate participants, 63% were very satisfied with the program overall, 89% felt that the course was definitely worthwhile for them, and

74% would definitely recommend the course to their friends. Participants also offered some important suggestions for improvement. Hmong participants had opportunities to express these ideas directly to the co-facilitators and me during the paired qualitative interviews, but they also had the chance to offer suggestions during their individual interviews with Hmong interviewers who were not a part of the project (see Appendix B, section H for questions asked during the midpoint and post-intervention interviews). Undergraduates completed written questionnaires at the end of the intervention with questions about their satisfaction and suggestions for improvement, which did not include their names and which were not reviewed until after grades were completed.

Structural Issues

Several Hmong and undergraduate participants identified structural aspects of the project that could be improved, such as the allocation of time in the learning circles, attendance and time requirements, activities outside of the learning circles, and the balance between learning and advocacy.

More one-on-one studying during learning circles. The most common structural suggestion from Hmong participants was to devote less time during each learning circle to cultural exchange discussions and more time to one-on-one learning. In fact, when asked individually during their post-interviews, 52% of Hmong participants said they thought the learning circles should include more one-on-one studying time. This seemed to reflect the urgency most Hmong participants felt to learn English and study for the citizenship test, and also certain ideas about what type of learning was useful:

I feel that the project should stay the same except for one thing. With the discussion, we tend to go for a long time, and I really like the discussion, but because I don't understand it as well and I don't know it well enough that it seems to me that, I think I should get more time to study. If we have more time to study,

then maybe when I start learning more then I'll be able to sit in with the conversation and add in and talk into the conversation. But because I don't know the language, and so I think I need more time to study, and more time to read and learn and understand more before I can start the longer conversations that we have. (#40902H, p.9)

The undergraduate who was her partner agreed:

I think it's a good idea too, because it seemed like if we went over the half hour or whatever, that would cut into the study time...And I really enjoyed the discussions, because I learned a lot, just what other people had to say, but I think that it seemed like most of the women there, too, they just really wanted to study, and that was the most important thing. (#40902U, pp.9-10)

Another Hmong woman explained that she would sometimes begin her individual studying during the discussion time:

And also, I had to admit it, sometime, because I have such a short time to study, and some time I myself would just get too eager and not worry and just go ahead and try to study, before everybody's done talking. (#20802H, p.10)

Keep participants more engaged in discussions. Because some participants wanted to focus more on one-on-one learning, one undergraduate noticed that it was sometimes difficult to keep everyone engaged in the discussions:

I agree with you that everything has been pretty good. I think the only thing that might be a little bit more beneficial is, I don't even know how you would do this, but during learning circles, if the group time, if it could be more involved...because everybody needs to understand that what is being talked about is relevant to them, and is important. (#20802U, p.10)

More group time on citizenship. A suggestion that might address some of the tension between one-on-one learning time and the cultural exchange discussions was to focus more of the group time on issues relevant to the U.S. citizenship test:

One thing I think that could be different is since a majority of the people need to work on citizenship, then there should be a 15 or 20 minute cut where everybody does citizenship together and gets it verbalized in English and Hmong. (#40402U, p.16)

Attendance issues. Several Hmong participants felt that there should have been more strict attendance policies for the learning circles. Primarily, they were concerned that some Hmong participants were not attending every learning circle, and that this was wasting the undergraduates' time as well as squandering resources that others in the community wanted:

I think that it would be good if we still have programs like this in the future, because it would help the Hmong people a lot, especially me. And also one other thing I will suggest is probably because for the Hmong lady, because I know that some of them are sick, and some of them have babies, but that's why they couldn't come. But most of them, they just don't wanted to come, because they feel that it's not importance to them, and then they just wanted to come when they wanted to or when they don't wanted to, they don't come. And then I just want to suggest that in the future, if you going to do this again, then talk to those lady and make sure that they going to come like they supposed to. ...And stress to them, that this is important and that it would help you and you should come as much as you can. ...And also I think that one of the reason why the Hmong people are acting this way because we never go to school. And then they won't know how the structures are...And I think that's one of the reason why they think that, well I'll just go whenever I wanted to and when I don't want to, then I stay home. And that's one of the reasons, but I think that next time, you should stress that if you register for it, then you have to come, unless it's emergency. (#40502H, pp.10-11)

Given these concerns, several participants wanted to emphasize their good attendance:

I think I'm one of the person who come here with the least absence. (#30602H, p.12)

One thing that I'm sorry about for the students and Jessica is because some of us Hmong ladies, we come to classes, say we're going to come, but then at the end ... we come when we want and don't come when we don't want. And it's really sad that some of us does that to the student because they spent their time there to come and help us and we don't have to pay anything to come there, and they're spending their time just to be with us, and I feel really bad that some women just don't come to class when the students are coming. And I feel kind of embarrassed, because some women does that to the student. And I'm very sorry that that happened, but Jennifer is there for me, and so I'm going to come there when she come there. (#10802H, p.13)

On the other hand, one undergraduate felt that the attendance policy for the undergraduates was too strict.²² There were uneven attendance expectations because the undergraduates were receiving course credit for their participation in the project. The requirement for undergraduates was definitely difficult for some, particularly for those who had children or who were working:

Well I feel that the project is very good, it's great. It's still in its learning stages so the only thing that you always keep it on the back of your head, is that if I don't make it in tonight it's going to be counted against me. Just that kind of thing, you always worry that if you don't show up it's going, your whole, everything you worked for is going down the drain, and that really puts a lot of tension. (#41502U, p.10)

Better preparation for time commitment. Related to the concern about learning circle attendance requirements, several undergraduates talked about the substantial time commitment involved in the course and expressed that it was larger than they expected:

I ended up being able to budget my time okay, but I didn't realize it would be as time consuming as it was, so if you were to do something like this again, maybe put a little more emphasis on letting people know that it will take more time than you think it will. The second semester definitely took more time than I thought it would, and some of it was like great when I had the time; other times I felt like, oh my gosh, I have all these exams this week and I still have to do this and that. (#30602U, p.11)

And then I was going to say, I had no problem like spending as much time as I spend with her and with the kids outside of learning circles, but some of my classmates, they had to work, so I think they couldn't find the time to spend with the family they are working with outside of learning circles as much as they wanted to. (#10802U, p.12)

More field trips. While many participants emphasized aspects of the learning circles that could be improved, several other participants suggested additional group activities outside of the learning circles, which could be both educational and fun:

And the only thing I just see is maybe a few more trips like the one that they took to the museum and whatnot. It's hard though, because when the winter's—and

²² Undergraduates were allowed to be absent from no more than two learning circles each semester.

when it's snowing outside and it's ten degrees. But maybe just a few more things like that, or maybe like a little get-together at someone's house occasionally. (#41202U, p.7)

I'd kind of liked to see if we could have done more field trips as a group. Obviously we kind of broke up into groups, but do stuff like that. (#10902U, p.12)

Clearer expectations to Hmong participants about advocacy. Finally, several undergraduates felt that the advocacy aspect of the project was not clearly communicated to some of the Hmong participants. It is not necessarily easy to determine whether misunderstandings occurred or whether some participants' major interests centered on learning rather than advocacy:

Well it seems like you did all the interviews and stuff before and find out what everybody needed? But it seems like a lot of the Hmong people were still under the impression that it was just going to be a study thing, or it was just going to be for them, and that it wasn't for their whole families, it seemed. That's what I gather from some of the other people that said that they weren't getting as much work done with their family or something like that. So I don't know if it just wasn't clear enough, or people just wanted really to be more studying, that they didn't need as much help. (#40701U, pp.15-16)

I think it went really well too, and I think that if it was to be done again, the only one suggestion I would have is to make sure that, because there's not the English to Hmong, it's hard to translate sometimes. And then to just to really make sure that both sides, that everybody knows, not just talking about me here, I mean I didn't necessarily know either, but just that everybody from all sides knows what's expected when they come, because I think that a lot of people just thought that this might be just teaching or just tutoring, as opposed to what was expected of the project. So I think it maybe needed to be emphasized more. Not everybody understood what was expected out of the advocacy. (#40102, p.10)

Training for Undergraduates

Undergraduate participants had several suggestions about ways to improve the training they received during the first 12 weeks of class. Most of their ideas focused on specific elements of training, such as English as a Second Language training or additional

resource and advocacy training and information. However, some undergraduates also had suggestions regarding the length and structure of training.

More ESL training. The most frequent comment from undergraduates involved requests for additional English as a Second Language training. Although we spent several class periods on this topic and had an optional all-day training, a major part of almost all participants' intervention was studying English, and it became evident that undergraduates would have benefited from more extensive ESL training:

I think the program's a really good idea. If you can get it going another at State, that'd be great. I guess one of the things was maybe during the training for the students to teach the Hmong people, just more ESL training and stuff like that...for me that would have been beneficial through maybe the training part that we did before. (#41002U, p.9)

The only thing that I can really think of is the semester before we start, maybe we could work with some more ESL packets, like the *Tutor Survival Guide* that I got. That's got a lot of little games that we could play in class so that we could have some ideas to fall back on when things don't work out. But just little things like that. (#20601U, p.10)

More opportunities to learn Hmong. In addition to improving communication through more ESL training, several undergraduates also thought that it would have been helpful and interesting to learn more of the Hmong language. Undergraduates learned a few Hmong phrases (e.g., what is your name and how are you) during a class exercise on effective methods for teaching a second language in which we spoke only in Hmong to them, but some were interested in learning more:

Another thing, maybe for us to have learned more Hmong language. Everything else was good though. I don't think there's anything else that could have been changed. (#20102U, p.14)

I can't speak any Hmong, and if I could, I think it would help out a lot because I'd be able to translate for her, and say, look this is what this means, and so I found when I was teaching, I wish I knew Hmong, because I think it would have helped Bao a lot more, and so I think maybe, because I know we learned, how are you,

and what's your name, but that's it, and I barely remember that. And Kou taught us a little bit back in December, before he left. And so I know that, but I wish I knew a little bit more of the language, which would be something, before we even paired up with the Hmong women, like something we learn before that. Just to give us more of a background of the language, that would have helped a lot. (#11402U, p.12)

More advocacy and resource training. Some undergraduate participants had specific suggestions about additional advocacy and resource training, including additional guest speakers and in-class role-plays:

Having people come in and talk about taxes or buying a house or loans, and I don't really think any of us really, I mean we definitely found out a lot about it, but just to know some when they ask us questions. (#11202, p.12)

One thing I could think of for the first semester, when we were in the classroom, would be to do some more role-playing. Maybe a little less of the papers and more of the role-playing, because sometimes a situation might come up, like for instance, would be the dentist, and I'm not necessarily sure exactly sure how to go about taking care of it. Your help was really helpful at that point, but if there was maybe some more in-class role-playing where you actually have to do it more often I think, you might remember how to word questions or how to go about things like that a little bit better. And that would be helpful for doing the second half. (#30602U, p.11)

More time working with families/less classroom time. Although several undergraduates had suggestions that involved additional training, many simultaneously wanted more of their time to be devoted to working with the Hmong participants and their families and less time to be spent in the classroom. This seems to reflect the value of the hands-on experience undergraduates received, and further demonstrates that, for many of them, the majority of their learning occurred because they were learning from the Hmong participants.

I would say I wish that I got to work with her longer. I know that it was really important to learn about all the culture and everything at the beginning, and about the strategies for learning...but I guess I would say, I would either shorten the introduction part or I would ask the Hmong people to help us learn those things, instead of learning them from the books, and start the more hands-on experience

to it. I wish there was a longer time. Maybe start at the beginning meeting with them one day a week, instead of one of the class days or something, and do it like that all the way through and then build up to the whole experience a little bit. (#40802U, p.12)

I think if I was going to participate in the project again, I think I would want less of the time that we spent in the classroom, because I think that I learned more within the first week of being with Lee than I did being the whole time in the classroom, relatively speaking. (#40202U, p.10)

Resources

Participants had several suggestions regarding additional resources, including learning materials, money, and childcare that would have been helpful, although most recognized the constraints of the small budget of the project.

Learning materials. Because a significant amount of time and energy was devoted to learning, a few participants recognized other educational resources that would have enhanced participants' learning experiences, such as additional worksheets, books, and computers:

I think it would have been nice to maybe have more money to buy more resources, like worksheets for different levels. Or even books for the people who could read, things like that. But I know that's really hard to do. (#41101U, p.6)

Well I think the program runs really, really well. But projects like these, I understand, do not get much money to do stuff. But what I think would be really wonderful for projects like this which probably never happen is to be able to, if you had more computers, or you had resources that we can go to, resources that could be here for them to use, which I think would help immensely... so I think that there's one thing that could be brought into this program that could improve it, would be just one, money, and two, computers. (#10502U, pp.14-15)

Money. Although undergraduates were encouraged to plan activities with their families that were free or inexpensive (both so that the undergraduates did not incur large expenses and so that Hmong participants could learn about fun, affordable activities in

their communities), one participant thought that having small allocations for each participant would have been useful:

I don't want to sound like I'm cheap, but I wish I could have taken her kids to the movie and stuff like that, but sometimes, even though I wanted to, I couldn't do it because I didn't have money with me. And I thought if there would be able to provide some money for this project. (#10802U, p.14)

Childcare. Most participants had children, and thus, not surprisingly, childcare was definitely an issue for many. Although the morning and evening learning circle options offered participants some flexibility, there were women who sometimes came late or missed learning circles because of a lack of childcare. In addition, there were participants who sometimes brought their children to the learning circles when necessary. Ideally, the project would have provided childcare so that participants were able to attend learning circles and focus exclusively on their studies. One participant expressed the concern that many participants shared:

But the thing that I'm worry about is if I'm able to, talking about childcare and the problems, if I'm able to, then I wanted to go and study as much as I can... (#41002H, p.9)

No changes

Although participants provided many useful suggestions for improvement, there were also Hmong and undergraduate participants who believed the project should remain exactly as it was, if it were to be implemented in the future. For the most part, these comments seemed to reflect overall satisfaction with the project:

I feel that it's been great so far, and if anybody were to do this, I wouldn't want them to change anything. I think they should leave it the same as it is. (#40802H, p.12)

I think that everything went really well. ...I wasn't sure how it was going to work, and all the questions after the first semester: What's this going to be? And where do we do it? How's this going to go? But everything was real easy, turned out

easy, and worked out well, successful. So I don't really have any improvements or suggestions. (#40502U, p.10)

I feel that, Jessica, this is a really good class that you have started and established for us this year. I wouldn't change anything about it. If they were to continue a program like this, it should be all the same, because I see people went through the program like this, and everybody learned a lot. (#40402H, p.16)

I think that it was good. I think that especially the first semester, the training and the stuff that we got, as far as the resources that we put together ourselves, I think they helped out a lot second semester for me. And I think that the learning circles and the way that they're run, I think it's all really good. I think it's all really good and I don't think that there's any way that I can see to improve it. I think it's all good, the way it was done. It all went really smoothly and I just thought it was a good experience. (#30201U, p.7)

However, in a few cases, responses that no improvements were necessary may have demonstrated a tendency of some Hmong participants to attribute any difficulties they experienced to their own individual deficits rather than to a structural problem with the project:

Well I think that everything is good. But what can you change because no matter what change that you make, it's up to us. If we can't understand then we can't. It's not like something that we can just open up our mind and understand it, but it's just like we're stuck there so no matter what you do, we can't understand, so it's hard to say, but everything's going well as it is. (#20601H, pp.9-10)

You all have done everything perfect, to me it's perfect, but it's just myself that I couldn't learn, but I have no suggestions for it. (#41302H, p.9)

One participant indicated that she did not think any changes were necessary, but thought the decision was best left to future participants, which shows that she felt that everyone in the project had equal participation and that the structure was determined by the interests and needs of participants:

If we have programs like this again, I still wanted to continue learning. I think everything's going well. I don't have anything to say that we should change or do to make it better. But unless, in the future, if we have more people that have more things that they wanted to change or to add it to it, then we should do that. But it depends on the voting, the majority, (#30201H, p.7)

Gender/Gender Roles

An additional issue that emerged in the interviews involves gender, including both the gendered-nature of the intervention (all but two Hmong participants were women), the ways in which gender and gender expectations impacted Hmong women's participation in the intervention, its salience for undergraduates working with families in the intervention, and the ways in which participants learned about different gender roles from each other.

How Gender Impeded Hmong Women's Past Learning Opportunities

Both Hmong and undergraduate participants mentioned ways in which they felt Hmong women's learning opportunities had been constrained by their gender. Sometimes they talked about this with an explicit awareness of traditional gender roles, while other times it was unstated but clearly involved their responsibilities and role as Hmong women:

I haven't seen any school or classroom or anything like that or any teachers because all I've done was just babysitting my son and daughter-in-law's kids all this time, so I haven't seen any teachers or school... Well, if I was to come to United States and study English right away, then I'd probably learn more than I am. But because when I came here, I have to baby-sit my son and daughter-in-law's kids, I wasn't able to study and learn more. (#21402H, p.9)

It seems like when it comes to Hmong, the women seem to have more of a challenge. Like in Chae's case, her and her husband came over at the same time, but he speaks 80% English and understands pretty good. And then, Chae, probably because of the kids and stuff, did not have the opportunity that he had to go out into the community, well to learn English out in the community, so she had to rely on him more. It seems that it's more of a challenge for women as newcomers coming from the Hmong culture. (#40402U, p.7)

Yeah, I feel that you were right Lori, exactly about how you feel about the Hmong people. The Hmong women are housewife and take care of the kids, and because we have a lot of relatives and cousin around, they always have parties for weddings or whatever, not Shaman parties or whatever, that we have to go to and

we always have to help out and be the housewife and help everybody and help all the wives cook and stuff. And usually, like you were saying, all the men will go out there and get an education, go to work, and so they will basically know more than us women. But now that I feel that, all my kids are all grown up, so I see a lot of people going out there and learning, learning a lot of English and stuff so maybe if I do the same, if I go out there, when I go out there to the public and try to learn English, maybe I'll pick up like they did. (#40402H, p.7)

When I come, I don't know any English at all. I don't even know Hmong...I don't know how to write Hmong. When I live in Laos, I live in the mountains and usually, my parents just let the boys go to school, but with the girls, we always farm and we stay home and garden. So with me being up in the mountains and living outside the city, I have to farm and my parents won't let me go to school. But with the girls that live in the city, they're able to go to school and get an education. And so when I come to the United States, it's very, very hard for me to go about doing things and talking and speaking and people say hi to you, and I don't even know what hi means, and you just shake your head, that's it. (#41502H, p.5)

Thus, the project provided an important opportunity for many Hmong women who previously had not had many educational opportunities available to them:

It's very good for the Hmong people, because we never have school back then in our country, where we got to get educate equally for everybody. So for the lady, it doesn't matter about the age, everybody should come to study if they have program like this for us. (#40102H, p.9)

Salient Issue in Intervention

Gender impacted how undergraduates and Hmong participants interacted with each other and how they perceived the project. It also affected the ways in which Hmong participants could or could not participate in the project:

And I thought it was interesting that, because it was all women, I think we had kind of different conversations than it would have been if there had been men. Because sometimes they were talking about the women side of things in their culture, which I found really interesting. Just like how they were, as women of the Hmong culture, work together and the community that they make for themselves. I think that's...the main thing I learned. (#11402U, p.3)

I've never been around a class with so many women, but it's been good though, but I mean, it's really helping me to, I guess, be more comfortable with that. (#30302U, p.4)

One of the big thing is when you live with your mother-in-law, father-in-law, that feels like if you're a wife, a Hmong wife of the house, then you're going to have to stay home and do everything and not go to school, and so if you ever live with someone like that, then it just preventing you from doing things. And even though you want to do it, but then they're going to hate you forever if you're going to go to class and try to learn. Because they hate you. And I'm going through it right now because every time I come here, they hate me more and more because I come and try to learn. But, because of them, I sometimes come here and I'm like, "Oh god, I mean, I got to go home, because you know, she's going to think something and, they're going to hate me more." (#11402H, p.15)

Well the best thing for me is that we have programs like this to help the, especially for the Hmong women to study because this is what we need. And then, it helped me a lot. (#40502H, p.8)

A male undergraduate commented:

And also I think an important thing is that, for people that don't think that women can be friends with men or whatever, I think it's important to see Lee having a male teacher and being friends with a male, and just having a friend like that. I think that's important too and I think it's something we might have taught the group, because I know a lot of women were a little hesitant about that. (#40202U, p.7)

His Hmong partner replied with her perspective, which emphasized that the ability for men and women to work together is not only about a particular Hmong woman's decision, but also depends upon her husband and what he thinks:

Well for us, my husband's really, he has a lot of trust in me, and also he's really, and so we don't have any problems. But for other people, they might think differently, so they might have problems about it, but for me, it's okay, nothing's wrong with that, having a male teacher. (#40202, p.7)

Learning About Gender Roles from Each Other

Participants also talked about what they had learned from and taught to each other about gender roles in their respective cultures. Their comments seemed to indicate that they felt the learning circles were a safe place to share these differences with each other without feeling judged or pushed to change, but with space to consider different options:

Well, I think the thing I taught to them has been like the last time that I was talking about how we greet each others, as how the woman should respect the man, and how we should treat each other and it's like the difference between our traditional customs and then our cultures, and that I talk about in class, that it's different from American and in the way we do things, we celebrate, and then the way that woman should respect their husband and then when the student first hear it, they probably think, well it's so difference, and then it's so strict but actually it's not. Actually, it's not like that because when people come to this country most of them, some of them they still remember but then some of them, they might change a little bit, but most of them still practicing the same ways as back then, and then we still carry ourselves the same way. (#30302H, p.6)

Well I feel that I taught the others during the conversation, I feel that I'm the type of person where I still keep the same tradition, like for example, my boys. My boys, they could go out anytime they want, how late, whatever they want. But with my girls, with our culture, I don't usually let my girls go out because they're women, and we don't really want our girls to go out. So I still keep the old traditions...there's lot women in here that feel the same way as I do, like with the boys, they could go anywhere, but with the girls, they usually don't want them to go out. (#41202H, p.5)

I did learn something. I learned that Hmong people are the same, more or less, as Mexicans when it comes to some traditions and customs of man and wife and our husbands are very, how do I put it? They're the kings of their castles, but the queens run the house. (#41502U, p.7)

They [parents-in-law] won't let me go study, they won't let me do anything at all. And it's just so sad because I want to do it, but then I can't do it because if they don't tell me to do it then I can't do it. If they don't allow me to do it, then I can't go anywhere...but with the American culture, it's just easier for you, because you could put your mother and father-in-law to a nice nursing home or to whatever. (#11402H, p.18)

DISCUSSION

A growing body of research has documented that refugees' resettlement experiences and the stressors they endure in the process are related to their psychological well-being. Many researchers also argue for community-based, ecologically-grounded, and culturally-appropriate interventions to promote refugees' well-being. However, there are few studies that have attempted to create and thoroughly assess such efforts. This study is important because it documents a holistic intervention that addresses the exile-related stressors refugees face from an ecological and empowerment perspective. The implementation of the Refugee Well-Being Project demonstrates that creating a collaborative setting in which refugees have the opportunity to share their knowledge and cultures, have their experiences validated, learn English and other relevant skills and knowledge, and access resources that they need was beneficial in numerous ways.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative components of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the intervention on participants. Overall, the findings indicate that the intervention affected participants in many positive ways. The pattern of quantitative findings suggests that the intervention was most effective at improving Hmong participants' English proficiency, which increased both during and after the intervention. Citizenship knowledge also significantly increased for participants who were studying for the U.S. citizenship test, and although this increase did not continue after the intervention ended, improvements were mostly maintained with minimal attenuation of the effect. The intervention positively impacted other areas of participants' lives, including their satisfaction with resources, quality of life, and distress.

However, participants' increases in satisfaction with resources and quality of life and decreased distress were effects that were evident during the intervention but were not maintained after the intervention ended. Furthermore, there were two outcomes on which the intervention did not have any significant effect: difficulty accessing resources and happiness.

These patterns are most likely related to several factors, including the type of outcome and the length of time required to impact different aspects of refugees' lives. First, it makes sense that participants' concrete skills and knowledge (English proficiency and U.S. citizenship knowledge) were affected most strongly. Hmong participants worked directly on these areas every week with their undergraduate partners and thus an immediate impact was expected and evident. Hmong and undergraduate participants also worked directly on mobilizing community resources for Hmong participants and their families, and it was clear through the questions about participants' actual resources and their satisfaction with resources, that this concrete aspect of their lives improved. However, the reason participants' increased satisfaction with resources was not sustained after the intervention ended is most likely related to the lack of impact observed on participants' difficulty accessing resources. Undergraduates were effective at mobilizing community resources with Hmong participants, but complete transfer of these skills requires time. Newcomers not only need to know the locations of community resources and advocacy techniques for mobilizing them, but also need to have the ability to speak English and the self-confidence to advocate for themselves.

Quality of life, distress, and happiness are more abstract concepts, which are less easily changed, are often mediated by other factors, and which may change more slowly.

For instance, in an advocacy intervention with women who experienced domestic violence, initial increases in women's quality of life were mediated by social support and effectiveness obtaining resources (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002). Given the complexity of these constructs, it is likely that the observed effects could have been sustained with a longer intervention and that other effects and relationships might have been found with a longer follow-up period. These possibilities are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

Participants' descriptions of the impact of the intervention were important because they provided additional evidence to support the quantitative findings, while also revealing other effects of the intervention. In particular, Hmong participants' sense of empowerment and control over their lives increased through their participation in the intervention, which they described in terms of environmental mastery, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, social support, and ability to set future goals. They also talked about positive impacts on their children. For both Hmong and undergraduate participants, the intervention also provided opportunities for cultural exchange, including the breaking down of barriers, learning about and valuing others' culture and having their own cultures and identities validated. Finally, the intervention raised the consciousness of many undergraduate participants who described their increased understanding of the difficulties of being a newcomer to the United States, their reassessment of their values and worldview, and the need for system change.

Given these patterns of findings, this study makes three main contributions. First, it highlights the salience of resettlement experiences and exile-related stressors to refugee well-being; demonstrating that refugees' distress is not due only to individuals' past

traumas, but is also related to the resources, skills, and knowledge they have, as well as their opportunities to be valued and validated by their communities. Second, the utility of an ecological and empowerment approach that emphasizes community-based, culturally appropriate interventions that involve people in solving their own problems was confirmed. Third, the importance of bringing Americans into close contact with newcomers and creating opportunities for mutual learning was demonstrated. The mutual learning emphasized in this project showed that this is an effective way to help people, through transforming traditional “helping” relationships and empowering people to make their own decisions and be experts in their own lives. In this chapter, these impacts and contributions are further detailed and the study’s challenges and limitations, implications for policy and practice, and future directions are also discussed.

Refugee Well-Being

The primary goal of the Refugee Well-Being Project was to improve the well-being of Hmong refugees. In particular, it was expected that Hmong participants’ quality of life and psychological well-being would be directly impacted by their participation in the intervention. In addition, it was hypothesized that increases in English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and access to resources would mediate the increases in quality of life and psychological well-being, as explanatory mechanisms of the intervention.

Quality of Life

The increase in participants’ quality of life during the intervention, as evidenced by the significant growth trajectory and participants’ comments, is particularly important given that a longitudinal study of Hmong, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Chinese refugees revealed that the Hmong were the only group whose quality of life decreased over time

(four time points over 10 years), the longer they had been in the United States (Rumbaut, 1989a). The reversal of the trend Rumbaut found, as well as the attenuation of the effect after the intervention ended, suggests that the observed increase in participants' quality of life is probably not due to a maturation effect of quality of life increasing for refugees who have been in the United States for longer periods of time.

Psychological Well-Being

Although Hmong participants talked about ways in which both their distress was decreased and their happiness was increased through their participation in the intervention, the growth trajectory modeling revealed a significant decline in distress during the intervention, but no significant pattern regarding happiness. Rumbaut (1991a) found that men's levels of distress decreased over time as they were in the United States, but that women's did not. Given that all of the Hmong participants in the analyses were women except one, this finding is important, and provides evidence that the observed decreases in distress are not due to a maturational effect of distress declining over time for refugees in the United States. This is further substantiated by the shape of the growth trajectory for distress, which revealed an attenuation of the effect after the intervention ended. Therefore, it is most likely that distress decreased during the intervention because of attention to post-migration factors. The findings regarding distress are consistent with Rumbaut's (1991a, 1989a) longitudinal study of 500 Southeast Asian refugee adults (Hmong, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Chinese Vietnamese), in which he found that as refugees have been in the United States longer periods of time, current exile-related stressors become much more predictive of distress than pre-migration traumas.

It is not clear why participants' levels of happiness (as assessed by the happiness growth trajectory modeling) were not significantly affected by the intervention, although it is important to note that Rumbaut (1991a) emphasizes that distress and happiness are not opposites of one another, but rather measure different constructs. Furthermore, he rarely uses the happiness scale in his analyses, conducting the majority of his research on refugee mental health with the quality of life and distress measures. It may be that quality of life and distress are more amenable to change, while happiness may be more indicative of a character trait that tends to be more stable over time.

Mediators

Although Hmong participants' quality of life and psychological well-being did improve, only one mediating relationship was detected: increased satisfaction with resources as a mediator for increased quality of life. This finding suggested that participants' increased quality of life could be explained by their improved access to resources. This is consistent with the findings from advocacy interventions with other populations (e.g., Bybee & Sullivan, 2002), as well as the theories of other researchers (e.g., Diener & Fujita, 1995; Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). In addition, it lends further support to the growing research on the importance of exile-related stressors in explaining refugees' well-being.

Although access to resources did not mediate decreased distress, an interesting pattern emerged. Satisfaction with resources was significantly related to distress at the pre- and mid- time points, but this relationship disappeared at post and follow-up time points. It might be that by improving participants' access to resources, the relationship between satisfaction with resources and distress disappeared for a while because the

impact that improved access to resources has on reducing distress might take time to manifest in participants' lives. A longer period of follow-up with participants would have allowed this possible explanation to be tested.

English proficiency and citizenship knowledge were not significant mediators of either distress or quality of life. However, they did improve significantly throughout the intervention, and will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Given the documented relationship between English proficiency and well-being among refugees and immigrants (e.g., Rumbaut, 1991b; Ying & Akutsu, 1997), it might be that mediating relationships would be detected among these variables and quality of life and/or distress with a larger sample size or a longer-term follow-up period.

Promoting Refugee Well-Being Through Attention to Exile-Related Stressors

Refugees who resettle in the United States face numerous daily stressors and challenges in their new lives. They must re-build and re-shape every aspect of their lives – work, love, home, social connections, and meaningful roles – in a foreign environment with a different language and culture. Thus, it is not surprising that a significant amount of refugees' distress is due to these post-migration factors, rather than persisting only as a result of past traumas. The salience of these factors highlights the importance of ameliorating these stressors in order to promote the well-being of refugees. Further, although the past traumas refugees have survived cannot be erased, it is possible to improve the conditions of their current lives. These current stressors include the language barrier; lack of knowledge and skills to negotiate new communities and environments; exploitative working conditions and/or difficulty finding a job; lack of access to other resources, such as health care, housing, homework help for children; and

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loss of valued social roles and connections. This intervention supported refugees in addressing these challenges in positive ways, which is evident in the observed increases in Hmong participants' English proficiency, knowledge for the U.S. citizenship exam, and access to resources. In addition, many Hmong participants acquired other new skills and knowledge, including job-related skills (e.g., how to fill out job applications, basic math), heightened awareness of their rights in the workplace, social support, and help for their children.

English Proficiency

One of the most vital resources for newcomers to the United States is English proficiency. It is linked to refugees' access to health care and social services, their ability to communicate with and learn from other Americans, and their psychological and socioeconomic well-being (e.g., Hinton et al., 1997; Rumbaut, 1991b, 1989a; Ying & Akutsu, 1997). Thus, it is important that Hmong participants' English proficiency increased during and after the intervention. This finding was clearly documented in the significant growth trajectory of English proficiency and Hmong participants' frequent comments during the interviews about the English they had learned. Participants' increased English proficiency is not surprising, given that Hmong participants had the opportunity to learn the English they wanted and to learn it one-on-one at their own pace. In addition, a significant amount of learning a new language occurs through practice in a comfortable, safe environment.

U.S. Citizenship Knowledge

Acquiring the knowledge necessary to pass the U.S. citizenship test was a primary goal of many Hmong participants. However, the patterns of change on this outcome

(growth trajectories) were different because not all participants were focused on studying for the U.S. citizenship test. Growth trajectory modeling was an important statistical technique, because it allowed for an examination of significant overall patterns of change, as well as individual factors (moderators) that explained the different trajectories. As might be expected, participants who studied for the U.S. citizenship test as one of their goals during the intervention demonstrated large significant gains in citizenship knowledge, while other participants did not. Furthermore, this finding lends credibility to the conclusion that the increases in citizenship knowledge among Hmong participants who were studying for the test were due to their participation in the intervention.

Lesch & O'Donoghue (1999) relay and discuss a quote from a Hmong woman who participated in learning circles at the Jane Addams School for Democracy in Minnesota to explain the importance of participants' acquisition of knowledge for the U.S. citizenship test:

Passing the test gives not only outside validation as members of this nation, but also safety. It removes fear of deportation, of withdrawal of welfare or social security benefits, and of denial of opportunities with which citizens are privileged. [As one Hmong participant said] 'Every day they talk about how they're going to cut all the Asians from assistance, and if you're not a citizen, you can't get assistance. It's not like people are using guns to fight, but it is the same as a war. There are the sounds of war, the voices of war.' Becoming a citizen, therefore, provides a perception of security for a people who have lived through so much tragedy and uncertainty (p.7).

Thus, becoming a U.S. citizen involves gaining access to the same rights, protections, and benefits as other Americans, which is particularly relevant after the events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent further erosion of the rights of non-citizens. In addition to the increased safety, protection, and rights that U.S. citizenship affords to legal residents of the United States, the increases in citizenship knowledge

among Hmong participants also increased their ability to participate in political processes in the U.S. and build their self-confidence and self-efficacy. Several participants talked about the sense of accomplishment and excitement they felt because they were prepared to achieve a goal that they never imagined possible and mentioned the new goals they were setting for themselves after they passed the U.S. citizenship test.

Although passing the U.S. citizenship test was an important goal and achievement for many participants, both for material reasons and for the sense of accomplishment and empowerment they attained, it is also important to critically examine the requirements for U.S. citizenship. As Lesch and O'Donoghue (1999) point out, the 100 questions that applicants are required to know are all about white men in U.S. history except for one question about Martin Luther King, Jr. The only question involving Native Americans asks about who helped the pilgrims when they first arrived in America, and there are no questions that involve women. Not only could most Americans not answer the 100 questions correctly, but the history and experiences of most Americans are not represented in the U.S. history that the U.S. government has deemed important. Furthermore, applicants must be able to demonstrate their ability to read, write, and speak English in order to pass the test. It is important for all Americans and residents of the United States to consider what it is that Americans should know or what it really means to be an American. Most Americans are not aware of the requirements for the U.S. citizenship test. However, through the video *Citizenship: Would You Pass?* made by Hmong teenagers in Minnesota that the undergraduates watched in training and through discussions and experiences studying together in the learning circles, all participants' awareness of these issues was heightened. As undergraduates learned how difficult the

test was, Hmong participants put their struggles in perspective as they realized that many Americans could not pass the test that they were preparing to take. Thus, all participants' critical consciousness was increased and Hmong participants were empowered by the realization that they could accomplish something that was extremely difficult.

Other Skills and Knowledge

Participants also acquired other skills and knowledge that were important for them in negotiating their new lives and reducing their stress, including: basic math, check-writing, job application and interviewing, and knowledge about employees' rights in the workplace. Learning these new skills and knowledge was highly individualized, based upon the goals of each Hmong participant and her work with her undergraduate partner. These findings further support the importance of the one-on-one learning opportunities for participants, as well as the qualitative component of the evaluation, which made it possible to assess these many different outcomes.

Social Support

Many Hmong participants talked about the social support they felt as a result of their involvement in the intervention. It was clear that most participants looked forward to the learning circles not only as special times each week for them to focus on their own learning and goals, but also as opportunities to see friends and build new relationships. Both Hmong and undergraduate participants frequently brought food or snacks to share with the group. For many women, particularly those who could not drive and were not employed, the learning circles were a rare opportunity to interact with other Hmong women and other Americans. Because refugees usually experience so much cultural change and separation from their home and family members, they need opportunities to

re-create meaning in their lives and to connect with people (Bennett & Detzner, 1997). In addition, social support has been shown to be significantly related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being among Vietnamese refugee women (Yee, 1992), and could be expected to have a similar relationship for Hmong refugees. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the increased social support developed during the intervention was maintained for Hmong participants. At the final few learning circles, many Hmong women began to spontaneously talk about how much they were going to miss the learning circles and all of the participants. However, my subsequent involvement in the Hmong community suggests that Hmong women who previously did not know each other's names formed new connections, and they frequently mention how different participants are doing. In addition, smaller informal learning circles have continued with a subset of the Hmong participants and a few undergraduates. Yet, when an undergraduate suggested at the end of the intervention (in response to a Hmong participant's comments about how much she was going to miss the learning circles) that the Hmong women continue to meet as a group to talk, share ideas, and possibly study, many Hmong participants seemed to feel that this would not be acceptable to their husbands.

Help with Children

Another common stress in refugees' lives is their concern for the well-being of their children. Because many newcomers are not able to help their children with their homework and have difficulty communicating with their children's teachers and other school personnel, they often feel particularly powerless and frustrated in this area. In addition, research has documented that when acculturation occurs at different rates,

which is usually the case between parents and their children (particularly when the children are in school where they have daily contact with the new culture while many women and older people tend to be more isolated at home), it creates significant stress (e.g., Westermeyer, 1991). Furthermore, the role reversals that often come when children have to assume adult roles to translate for their parents and interact with the outside world are also very difficult for both parents and children.

Thus, it was important that many Hmong participants felt that their undergraduate partners had helped their children – assisting them with their schoolwork, finding tutors for children who were struggling, advocating with teachers and schools, and broadening parents' ideas about fun, affordable activities to do with their children in the community. In addition, in the learning circles we had several discussions about raising children in the United States in which all participants shared their ideas and experiences. We also had a guest speaker attend learning circles one day who was a Hmong man working as a youth specialist in the schools. One participant talked about ideas she had acquired about raising her children through the discussions and guest speaker:

Well, to think about it, I did learn one thing – that in the discussion when we were talking about the kids, the teenagers and then they mentioned, they say that your kids will become a good person, it's up to you, the way you discipline them and then you have to, you are the parents and you have to make sure that they will become the best person that they can, instead of just leave it onto the teachers. . And also that you have to be patient with your kids and check with your kids to make sure that they go to school, that they get good grades. (#40701, p.11)

However, intergenerational issues were not the primary focus of the intervention, and there were other participants who had unanswered questions and issues:

But I do have a question to ask both of you [undergraduate and Jessica] and see what you think. I feel that for the teenagers, for myself, I don't want my children to go to school and then to cause problems, to make problems for anything and I wish that they can, there's something that will be able to help them to go to school

safely or that will teach them to have a better behavior or not to, to teach them the right way and the wrong way, and then, just so that they don't go out there and then make trouble and get in trouble. Because to me, I don't know the language and it is hard when my kids get in trouble, and I think that there should be something about it, that's something that I just wanted to ask you and see what you think about it. (#20601, p.6)

Access to Resources

The quantitative and qualitative findings on Hmong participants' access to resources suggest that although participants' access to and satisfaction with resources improved during the intervention, their ability to access resources on their own and their perceptions of the difficulty of accessing resources may not have changed substantially during or after this intervention. The transfer of advocacy skills from undergraduates to Hmong participants was particularly difficult because of the language barrier most faced. This is illustrated by the comments of one Hmong participant, who was responding to her undergraduate partner's declaration that she wished they had accomplished more advocacy and resource goals together:

What the Hmong people really need is to study English, to understand it first, and then they will introduce the resource to them. That way they know English, and they can be able to use the resource on their own. Because if they don't understand English and they don't know how to speak the language, then even though you introduce the resource to them, they won't be able to use it. So it's not useful to them. So most of the people that don't know to speak English, they should study English first, and just work on the English. And then introduce the resource to them later. And so that way they would be able to use it. (#40701, p.17)

This quote highlights the importance of incorporating the different components of the intervention, including both learning and advocacy. Connections and access to community resources are essential in order for people to have a sense of control over their lives (Rappaport, 1977). However, for refugees, these connections need to include both the mobilization of community resources and the skills and knowledge necessary for

people to mobilize them on their own, one of which is clearly English proficiency. In this way, all of the outcomes discussed previously are related to each other and to refugees' well-being. As Lelaurin (2002) points out, holistic interventions to promote refugee well-being must include opportunities for refugees to meet their basic material needs, regain safety and a sense of control, reestablish attachments and connections to others, restore their dignity and value, and recreate their life meaning and purpose.

An Ecological and Empowerment Perspective

The Refugee Well-Being Project was designed from an ecological and empowerment perspective. In order to be ecologically valid, the intervention was developed in close collaboration with Hmong community members, based upon their needs and interests, and attributes of their culture such as their collective orientation. In addition, attention to their experiences as refugees, such as loss of control over their lives and the cultural differences they face in their daily lives in the U.S., was incorporated into the project. Given such experiences, there is the potential for the further disempowerment and marginalization of refugee communities if power differentials between refugees and people who offer assistance to refugees are reinforced (Ager, 1999). Thus, it was important that the intervention was explicitly designed to have no experts, to be focused on mutual learning, and to foster equal relationships among all participants. Although power and privilege differences clearly existed among participants, attempts were made to minimize power differentials and emphasize the diverse strengths that people had. As Freire (1978) said,

Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only through such praxis – in which those who help and those who

are being helped help each other simultaneously – can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped (p. 8).

Another aspect of the empowerment and ecological perspectives is building upon the strengths of individuals and communities to involve them in solving their own problems. Rappaport (1981) suggests that we need to move beyond a needs model (prevention) or rights model (advocacy), which both suggest professional experts as leaders who know the answers and provide them to their “clients,” to empowerment where we are collaborators. Empowerment implies that many competencies are already present among individuals and communities, and that structures and connections need to be built to fully utilize these. Ager (1999) points out that a focus on the past traumas of refugees may reinforce a discourse of refugee vulnerability and dependency. He suggests that we need to balance this with emphasis on the resiliency of refugee communities and the resources within the communities. This intervention was clearly successful in maintaining this focus, as evidenced by the numerous comments made by undergraduates about recognizing the strength, resiliency, and determination of the Hmong participants in surviving and thriving amidst the many challenges refugees face.

According to Parsons, Gutierrez, and Cox (1998), empowerment involves: 1) building skills and knowledge for critical thinking and action, 2) changing attitudes and beliefs, 3) collective validation, 4) securing real increases in power and resources through action. The findings of this study provide evidence that all of the aspects of the empowerment process were beginning to occur. Hmong participants developed skills and knowledge such as English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and the ability to better negotiate their environments; their attitudes and beliefs changed, including increases in their self-confidence, sense of control, and environmental mastery, and transformation of

misperceptions and stereotypes; their experiences, culture and identities were collectively validated in the cultural exchange and other parts of the learning circles; and they mobilized resources they needed in their lives. However, participants' comments suggested that more time was needed to fully achieve the goals of empowerment so that the changes that were occurring would result in permanent improvements and the confidence among Hmong participants that they would be able to handle issues that emerged in the future.

Another important component of empowerment is community participation. Often refugees may not participate in community activities and services because they cannot understand what is going on and they feel that their opinions do not matter. Furthermore, the current participation opportunities may not fit with the interests and needs of refugees. Thus, it is important to examine how participatory competence can be developed among newcomers so that they can become active participants, whether it is in existing participation opportunities or by creating their own avenues. This intervention sought to increase Hmong refugees' participation in multiple ways: improving their English proficiency so they could participate socially, politically, economically, or however they choose in their communities, helping them become U.S. citizens so they could participate in formal political processes in the U.S, creating the space for participants to think about democracy and question what democratic processes are really about, and fostering collective action. When people are disenfranchised, they see many of these activities as the domain of politicians or others, rather than envisioning a role for themselves in changing their communities. However, through the learning circles,

participants began to feel that their contributions did matter and they had opportunities to determine what they wanted to discuss and learn.

Mutual Learning: Education for Social Change

The Refugee Well-Being Project emphasized that newcomers and other Americans have much to learn from each other. Rather than a discourse of vulnerability, it focused on refugees as strong, resilient people whose experiences and cultures can contribute greatly to their communities. In this way, mutual learning became a form of social change. There are three main processes through which this occurred: 1) the validation of refugees' experiences, knowledge, and identities which was empowering to them; 2) the contribution that refugees made to undergraduates' education through the sharing of their enthusiasm, strength, resiliency, and cultures; and 3) the transformation of communities and contexts to be more receptive to refugees and the accompanying redefinitions of what it means to be an American and/or a refugee.

Validation of Refugees' Experiences, Knowledge, and Identities

As the comments of Hmong participants illustrate, through their involvement in the Refugee Well-Being Project, their Hmong identity was recognized by the undergraduates and their skills, knowledge, and experiences were valued. This occurred in the learning circles and in the time Hmong and undergraduate participants spent with each other outside of the learning circles. In addition, the paired qualitative interviews themselves were validating because Hmong participants heard directly from the undergraduates what the undergraduates had learned from them and how deeply the experience had affected them. Thus, these interviews were an important and powerful part of the process of the intervention because they provided participants with a more

formal opportunity to talk to each other about the relationships they had formed, to tell each other what they learned, and to communicate to each other how much the experience meant to them.

Newcomers spend the majority of their time in the United States realizing how much they do not know and trying to “catch up.” They are constantly reminded that their language, their skills, and their cultural knowledge are not relevant in their new lives. Rarely are they asked by other Americans to talk about their lives before they arrived here. However, refugees need to be able to build upon what they know and maintain a sense of coherence and meaning in their lives, while learning the new things they need to know. In her book about the learning experiences of Laotian refugee youth in an American school, Danling Fu (1995), an immigrant from China, explained how her own experiences of cultural exchange with Americans helped her learn about the United States and strengthen her own voice at the same time:

Through constant sharing and discussion about reading, writing, and many issues of education and literacy with my peers and mentors, I understood more and more about American society, culture, and people. In turn, this understanding helped me look at my native culture and world with a different perspective. My learning about the two worlds enlightened me and made me a reader, a writer, and a thinker with a much broader viewpoint. I was eager to express myself. My timid, uncertain, soft voice became strong and passionate (pp.12-13).

What “Americans” Can Learn From Newcomers

Among participants felt validated because undergraduate participants were genuinely learning from them and valuing their culture and knowledge. Undergraduates also benefited greatly from their experiences, and talked about many ways in which they were impacted personally (e.g., increased self-confidence, more connections with others, changed life goals). Most relevant for understanding mutual learning as a process for

social change was what undergraduates learned about the challenges of being a refugee in the United States, their re-examination of their own culture and values through learning about a new culture, and the formation of critical consciousness and awareness about the need for social change. Undergraduates' perspectives were transformed by engaging in advocacy with Hmong participants and seeing how difficult it can be for people to access the resources they need and get government assistance if they are poor, people of color, non-citizens, and non-native English speakers. Thus, through discussions and direct experience, many undergraduates began to realize all that they took for granted and were motivated to make changes in the world.

Changing the Unsupportive Political, Economic, and Social Contexts in the U.S.

As newcomers and other Americans learned from each other and validated each other's experiences, they acquired new skills, knowledge, values, and critical consciousness. Through these processes, they could begin to make change. As documented earlier, the economic, political, and social contexts in the United States are increasingly unsupportive (and sometimes even hostile) to immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers. It is clear that refugee resettlement and adjustment are not neutral processes. Americans have strong opinions about refugees and immigrants who resettle in the U.S. (e.g., Starr & Roberts, 1982) and there is certainly not a single definition of well-adjusted. It is important to ask questions about who defines adjustment and who decides which people are accepted to live in the United States. Fundamentally, we need to address the issue of how newcomers can live the kind of lives they want to live. Thus conscientization is important. Newcomers and other Americans need to be able to

critically evaluate the social conditions and structures in the United States and make decisions about what to accept, what to reject, and what to work to change.

One of the first steps in this process involves reducing stereotypes and developing genuine relationships within and across groups. Fu (1995) argues that “humans are too complicated to be grouped as stereotypes” (p.212). In order to avoid this, people need opportunities to really get to know each other and to understand the social conditions within which they and others are situated. Lesch and O’Donoghue (1999) ask: “How can one write about the experiences of people from an excluded and often unheard group and make their voices heard without them becoming representative of the entire group? Instead of reinforcing stereotypes, how can we discover the universality of human experience that enables us to form meaningful connections within and across groups?” (p.11). Hmong and undergraduate participants began to form these connections and discover “the universality of human experience,” as illustrated by their comments about seeing how they and other participants in the group actually had many similarities, shared much in common, and were able to learn from each other and work well together. Lesch and O’Donoghue (1999) continue to explain how forming relationships among members of different races and cultures reduces stereotypes:

In viewing multiculturalism as the product of our unique voices and perspectives, we begin to move outside of the cultural boxes that have been constructed by traditional views of diversity. When ‘culture’ is taught using ‘facts’ rather than authentic voices and lived experiences, people become members of a group and not individuals. They become what Danling Fu [1995] describes as ‘ethnic species’ rather than unique selves. Being labeled in this way denies the interplay of the many and varied forces that shape one’s unique life experience (p.12).

Thus, to challenge stereotypes and the unsupportive contexts in the U.S. involves redefining who belongs in the United States and what it means to be a refugee or newcomer.

Redefining “Hmong.” What do “Americans” think about refugees in general and the Hmong in particular? What do they know? Many Americans get their information from the media. The Hmong are frequently the focus of newspaper and magazine articles, perhaps because they are a recent refugee group with a different culture and ways of life that seem to fascinate many people in the United States. There are several common themes that recur in most media representations of the Hmong. While many of the images portrayed are myths, others are somewhat accurate. However, in both cases certain aspects of Hmong culture are repeatedly and negatively portrayed, rather than focusing on the strengths of Hmong culture or the tremendous adjustments which the Hmong have made to life in the United States.

Perhaps the most common representation of the Hmong is as a primitive and simple people and culture. They are often referred to as “primitive hill tribesmen” (Wongpaithoon, 1996, p.7A) and “a naïve people” (Lane, 1993, p.A9), who were living “simple lives” (Scharnberg, 1999). In fact, according to Fadiman (1997a), “journalists seized on a demeaning label that is still trotted out at regular intervals: ‘the most primitive refugee group in America’” (p.57). The notion of the Hmong as primitive is in opposition to the representation of White, middle class Americans as civilized. Another related focus of the media is on Hmong “primitive” agricultural techniques: “a clan-based people whose culture had no written language until recent times and centered on slash-and-burn farming” (Mydans, 1994, p.A10). Sherman (1988) stresses that “development

specialists have called their agricultural life in Laos primitive and environmentally unsound ” (p.292). However, although their “primitive” agricultural techniques are frequently criticized for the environmental damage that results, this damage pales in comparison to the environmental devastation perpetuated in the name of “development” and “progress” by the United States. Yet, these facts are rarely mentioned. Also absent is discussion of the devastation of Lao countryside by the millions of bombs dropped there by the United States in the pursuit of its colonial aspirations.

The media has also often emphasized the mysteriousness of the Hmong and their religion. “It could not be denied that the Hmong were genuinely mysterious” (Fadiman, 1997a, p.57). They are “a people steeped in animistic ritual, bound by good and evil spirits to a way of life filled with the magical and mystical” (Sherman, 1988, p.292). “Clustered in primitive villages in the rugged mountains of Laos, the Hmong had no written language until 1953 and lived simple lives based on a set of shamanistic superstitions and tribal taboos” (Scharnberg, 1999, p.C1). “Shamanistic superstitions and tribal taboos” connote primitive and irrational beliefs. Rather than subscribing to the logical and rational, the pinnacles of civilization according to “modern” and “enlightened” thought, the Hmong are represented as irrational and in need of “civilizing.”

Reporters frequently refer to the “ritual slaughter of animals” (Mydans, 1994, p.A10) by the Hmong and of “shamans sacrificing puppies to cure the sick” (Associated Press, 1996, p.D1). In part, this is misleading because Hmong do not eat dogs (or even puppies). However, the Hmong do kill cows, pigs, and chickens, which they eat – like many other Americans. The killing and eating of cows, pigs, and chickens is a common

practice in the United States, but these similarities are de-emphasized. In fact, most articles emphasize all the ways in which the Hmong are different from Americans. “In the first years after their arrival, the Hmong’s culture brought them into conflict with American law because some engaged in the medicinal use of opium, the kidnapping of brides or the ritual slaughter of animals. A few have leaped the cultural divide, but most remain poor” (Mydans, 1994, p.A10). This quote also illustrates the assimilationist belief that immigrants are poor because they have not assimilated to American culture and values (Mueller, 1994). Otherwise, what does “leaping the cultural divide” have to do with being poor? The assumption is that individuals or groups cannot be economically successful **and** hold on to own cultural traditions.

Redefining “American.” On the other hand, most newcomers learn about other Americans from the media also (Fu, 1995; Pipher, 2002). They frequently rely on television and popular magazines to inform them about American culture because they might not have other sources of information. Pipher (2002) explains:

Television tells newcomers lies – that most Americans are rich, that most African Americans are gang members and drug dealers, and that happiness comes from buying consumer goods and unhealthy foods....All refugee families are given televisions [or buy them] and encouraged to ‘improve their English.’ But television doesn’t improve English so much as foster shopping. In most refugee homes, televisions are always on and become virtual primers of acculturation. Families learn about America from the *Jerry Springer Show* and the *Simpsons*. They observe a monoculture with only three elements – sex, violence, and consumption (p.86).

Fu (1995) also describes how the media reinforce to newcomers ideas about Americans that are false. Furthermore, she found that the refugee youth she worked with were not “...learn[ing] underlying democratic values of the society – freedom, equality, and

individuality, the fundamental principles this nation is based on and the values for which [they] risked their lives and sacrificed everything” (p.57).

Thus, given the types of images of the Hmong and other refugees that Americans are bombarded with in the media and the images that newcomers receive of Americans, it is essential to consider ways to counteract these myths and to bring Americans and newcomers together to learn from each other and recognize their common humanity. As the quotes from participants illustrated, this project was successful in working towards this end. It is important to raise both Americans’ and newcomers’ consciousness so that when they are exposed to misperceptions and stereotypes, they can critically evaluate them and create their own definitions and values about Hmong and other refugees and immigrants, the United States, and Americans. As Mouachou Mouanoutoua (as cited in Sherman, 1988), a Hmong refugee who resettled in the United States said:

Being an American is really espousing the founding principles of freedom, no matter whether you speak the language or not. And if I say I believe in the founding principles that make America, I think that is what makes an American. It is your love for it, your belief in it, and your labor to protect it. And I think the Hmong...know in their hearts that these principles are what they have fought for, even in Laos – the basic principles of freedom (p.300).

Challenges/Limitations

Overall, the Refugee Well-Being Project demonstrated promising results. In addition to the positive impacts on Hmong and undergraduate participants, the project’s success was evidenced by the fact that participants continued to attend throughout the six months. However, it is important to recognize that there were numerous challenges throughout the implementation process and several challenges and limitations of the evaluation and research design.

Implementation Challenges

One of the most salient project challenges involved the language differences. Despite the excellent translation provided by the co-facilitators, many participants often felt frustrated with their inability to communicate with each other. This frustration subsided in some regards, as everyone learned that relationships could develop across language barriers and as participants learned more English (or Hmong in some cases). At the same time, however, as relationships grew stronger, participants' inability to fully express themselves to each other was also highlighted.

The short length of time of the project was also difficult for many participants. As the ending date approached, many of the Hmong participants began mentioning it during learning circle discussions and expressed their concern and disappointment. Participants' comments during the interviews and the shape of the growth trajectories clearly indicate that the intervention period was too short of a time in which to achieve fully sustainable changes. Implications and future directions related to this challenge are discussed subsequently. On the other hand, another challenge of this project was that it required a large time commitment from Hmong participants and undergraduate students, all of whom had many competing responsibilities including children, work, and classes.

Finally, despite the explicit attention devoted to avoiding dependency, there was a constant tension evident because many Hmong participants' limited English proficiency made it difficult for them to access resources in the community without the assistance of their undergraduate or a translator. This is linked to the issue of the length of the intervention. In order to avoid dependency, Hmong participants needed more time to develop English proficiency and other skills and knowledge required to mobilize

resources. In addition, a longer or on-going project would have provided opportunities to develop more sustainable changes, infrastructures, social networks, and relationships.

Evaluation Challenges

Evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention was a complex task. There were language and cultural considerations, marginality issues, and participants who had limited exposure to structured interviews with fixed responses. Thus, a research design with multiple methods was chosen with many considerations in mind. Some of the most important involved making sure that the evaluation of the intervention was consistent with the principles upon which it was based – that it be participant-focused and reciprocal, so that the interviews were not just something for me to use but they were valuable to participants by providing them with opportunities to share with each other and with me what their experiences were like. For example, before one of the interviews with a Hmong participant and his undergraduate, it was explained to them that if they agreed, their interview would be tape-recorded. The Hmong participant decided then that he also wanted to record the interview, and so he went to get his tape recorder. This demonstrated that he felt that the discussion was something that was meaningful and useful for him too.

Because this was a new project involving refugees from a non-dominant culture, it was important to understand the experiences of the Hmong participants in the intervention, as well as how their participation may have impacted their lives, from their perspectives. Thus, it seemed essential to allow participants to speak in their own words. Often, the voices of refugees are not heard, particularly because of language differences. It is also important to ensure that refugees have the opportunity to speak in their own

words because many times others speak for them. As Ager (1999) argues, refugee narratives and their lived experiences in their own words "...not only appropriately empower refugee voices within the discourse of refugee studies, but frequently provide challenging and critical insight into the receipt of refugee assistance" (p.3). It is important to examine interventions from the perspective of participants and to "...ask whether and how the person changes, not simply whether the program was successful" (Riger, 2001, p. 71). This project was able to do both by assessing participants' change over time on specified outcomes with a series of quantitative interviews and by valuing participants' perspectives through less-structured qualitative interviews.

Another challenging issue involved addressing language differences in both the qualitative and quantitative interviews. Although the qualitative interviews with four people (Hmong participant, undergraduate participant, co-facilitator, and me) seemed to work well, most of us were entirely dependent on the co-facilitator for translation. This meant that interviews took twice as long as they would have if everyone spoke the same language. My ability to understand Hmong assisted me during these interviews, but it is important to note that the qualitative analyses are based upon translations of Hmong participants' comments. The translation of the quantitative interview protocol involved a different challenge. Initially, the interview was constructed in English, translated into Hmong, and back-translated into English to check for accuracy. However, it was extremely difficult to find interviewers who were fluent in both English and Hmong and who could also read Hmong. Therefore, it was necessary to print the interview in English and review it as a group (co-facilitators and interviewers) during interviewer training to

ensure that all interviewers would translate the questions consistently. Optimally, the interviewers would have been able to use the Hmong version of the interview.²³

Another limitation of the quantitative interviews was uncertainty about the applicability and translatability of many of the measures. Although most of the measures had been used extensively with Hmong populations before, we found that certain items had been translated incorrectly on several of the scales. Other measures (Difficulty Accessing Resources and Satisfaction with Resources) were used with Hmong people for the first time. Furthermore, many participants had limited education and were not accustomed to forced-choice questions. In order to address these issues, the co-facilitators, interviewers, and I carefully reviewed the interview to simplify response choices for some scales and create picture response cards. The simplification of response choices was not ideal in terms of capturing variance, but it was important in creating usable measures.

Ideally, I had hoped to obtain two pre-interview quantitative time points (double pretest design) to establish a baseline and reduce the plausibility of maturation threats to validity. However, this was not possible because it did not make sense to Hmong participants to be interviewed three months before the project began and thus there was resistance to this idea. Many people were reluctant to complete the first interviews until the project was very close to beginning, so I obtained only one pre-interview for each participant.

Finally, many Hmong participants felt nervous about being “tested” during the English and citizenship sections of the interview, despite assurances that the project was being tested, not them. In fact, participants seemed more comfortable speaking English

²³ The English proficiency and citizenship knowledge measures are always administered in English.

to the undergraduates, other native English speakers, and the co-facilitators of the project than to the Hmong interviewers. Despite these challenges, however, a comprehensive evaluation strategy with multiple methods compensated for many difficulties and provided much valuable information.

Limitations of a Non-Experimental Design

The accumulated effects demonstrated by the growth trajectories and the qualitative findings suggest that the intervention had a positive impact on both Hmong and undergraduate participants. The combined quantitative and qualitative methodology employed in this study provided the opportunity to test specific hypotheses, while also allowing other issues to emerge from participants' descriptions of their experiences, including additional outcomes, a deeper understanding of the relationships formed among participants, and other salient issues in participants' lives. However, it is important to note that without a control group, it is impossible to conclude that all of the observed effects were definitely due to the intervention. For instance, there might be historical effects such as something else occurring in participants' lives or their community or a maturation effect of a natural trajectory of decreased distress over time as refugees are in the United States. However, the pattern of the growth trajectories of distress, quality of life, citizenship knowledge, and satisfaction with resources, which showed positive effects that diminished after the project ended, suggest that these effects were due to the intervention. A measurement issue, such as participants giving increasingly positive responses because of the general interest taken in their lives, is another possibility, but it is difficult to imagine how participants could show improvements in English proficiency or citizenship knowledge if this were the case.

In addition to potential maturational, historical, or measurement threats to validity, it is impossible to completely rule out alternative explanations of the intervention effects that involve the many social aspects of the intervention (e.g., opportunities for many participants who were fairly isolated to get out of their homes and meet new people). Because the study did not employ a placebo control group in which Hmong and undergraduate participants spent time together without a specific focus on the advocacy and learning components of the intervention, the increased social contact could be a counter argument for some of the findings (e.g., decreased distress). However, it is unlikely that English proficiency, citizenship knowledge, and access to resources would have increased without explicit attention to advocacy and learning. Furthermore, the finding that access to resources mediated increased quality of life lends support to the conclusion that improved quality of life was not merely a result of social contact.

Another design limitation is the small sample size of the study. Although I employed statistical methods that have been used successfully with sample sizes comparable to the one in this study, the stability of the findings are not certain. It is possible that the results could be affected by one or two people who had strong reactions to the intervention.

In terms of the qualitative interviews, the findings may be somewhat tenuous because participants might be reluctant to say anything negative about the project to their undergraduate partner, the co-facilitator, or me. The close relationships developed among participants, co-facilitators, and me and the fact that participants did offer suggestions and comments about aspects of the intervention they did not like suggest that people felt comfortable expressing their true feelings, but it is impossible to know this for

sure. It is important to note that participants also had opportunities to express their opinions about the project during their quantitative post-interviews with interviewers who were not a part of the project, and their opinions remained very positive. In sum, although conclusions must be drawn with caution, the patterns observed, the qualitative findings, the extremely minimal attrition, and my immersion in the community suggest that this intervention demonstrated promising results.

Implications for Policy & Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for policy and practice. First, the policy and practice implications of the main contributions of this study are explored, including the importance of focusing on exile-related stressors through the creation of holistic interventions; the necessity of ecologically-grounded, culturally appropriate interventions; and the importance of shifting the power balance among refugees and service providers in the United States through mutual learning. In addition, several other implications are addressed, including the length of time refugees receive attention and assistance in the United States; the sustainability of interventions, the multiple levels of analysis from which to address refugee well-being, the importance of connecting university resources to communities, and the particular implications of this study for refugee women.

Focus on Exile-Related Stressors

The success of this project lends support to the idea that attention to the psychological needs of refugees is important but inadequate if other needs are ignored. Rather than an exclusive focus on therapy to deal with the past traumas that refugees have experienced, holistic interventions that address material, social, and educational

needs and the challenges of living in a new country, as well as psychological needs, are important. This requires creative approaches and broader definitions of the appropriate roles for psychologists and other people who seek to promote the mental health and well-being of refugees.

Importance of Ecological Culturally-Appropriate Interventions

The positive impact of the intervention on participants and participants' high attendance rates at the learning circles were due not only to the project's holistic focus, but also to its community-based and culturally-grounded nature. The Refugee Well-Being Project was developed collaboratively with Hmong families, based on what was culturally relevant and appropriate and what they wanted and needed. Furthermore, the combination of the advocacy and learning components of the intervention was important because, in addition to addressing the particular needs of Hmong refugees (i.e., increased English proficiency, improved access to community resources), it was specifically structured to take into account the unique attributes of Hmong culture, particularly its collective orientation. By structuring the intervention around the learning circles, Hmong participants had a space to come together to learn, address issues and social problems collectively, and build upon the skills and cultural strengths they had to contribute to their communities. This demonstrates that effective interventions must attend to the particular attributes of participants' cultures and be developed collaboratively with participants.

Shifting the Focus from "Helping" to Mutual Learning

It is rare that assistance to refugees is structured in ways that attempt to minimize power differentials between newcomers and those offering their help. The hierarchical nature of typical helping relationships is in fact often more salient because there is

frequently a great deal that refugees do not know about life in the United States. However, it is particularly important when working with refugees to deconstruct the traditional helper/helped roles because their experience as refugees has frequently left them relatively powerless. Thus, it is important for practitioners and policy makers to recognize refugees' strengths, knowledge, and experiences and to rely on refugees' expertise on their own lives to shape services and policies. In addition, we also need more structural ways to incorporate refugees' knowledge and skills into their communities, such as opportunities for refugees to share their cultures and experiences with school children, their children's teachers, and other adult community members.

Length of Refugees' "Adjustment" Period

It is important to recognize that refugees' adjustment process continues beyond the initial resettlement period. Most refugee organizations, policies, and programs focus on the first six months after refugees arrive in the United States. Although this is a crucial time period, it is evident from the participants in the Refugee Well-Being Project that the challenges of adjusting to a new place persist for many years for some people, particularly those who have limited education and English proficiency. Thus, we need to think about ways to develop on-going support for and connections with newcomers for many years, so that they can truly become a part of their communities and not remain isolated.

Sustainability of Interventions

Another implication of my findings is that interventions such as the Refugee Well-Being Project need to be longer than six months. Many of the positive impacts the project demonstrated began to erode once it ended. Although this might suggest Hmong

participants' dependency on the undergraduate students, my observations and the qualitative interviews suggest that the types of processes that were occurring, the skills and knowledge we were trying to help participants build, and the social change efforts we were engaged in together, require longer periods of time. Empowerment is a process that takes time and that must include real and enduring increases in power and resources (Speer & Hughey, 1995). There is some evidence that this has occurred in this Hmong community in Lansing, and that it has persisted even after the intervention ended. For instance, at least six participants and their spouses have become U.S. citizens due to their involvement in the project. This accomplishment has had radiating effects throughout the Hmong community. U.S. citizenship has been a widespread goal among many members of the Hmong community, because it secures certain resources, rights, and protections. Previously, many Hmong people in Lansing perceived this goal as unattainable. However, there is now a common sentiment that it is possible, because people have seen their cousins, friends, and neighbors pass the test. Furthermore, many of the Hmong participants have shared their knowledge and materials with others (e.g., flash cards to study for the test, the test questions and study guides, knowledge of how to fill out applications and mail them in, an understanding of how and where to complete the process, and confidence that it is possible). The same phenomenon has occurred with other resources as well (e.g., health insurance for uninsured adults, tutoring resources for children).

The strong social network that existed within the Hmong community in Lansing has thus been infused with more material resources and knowledge. A growing body of research demonstrates that increased access to resources improves individuals' quality of

life, which in turn has long-term impacts on their future access to resources (e.g., Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Hopfoll & Lilly, 1993; Diener & Fujita, 1995). I was not able to measure follow-up beyond three months but this other research highlights that it is important to consider this aspect of sustainability as well. Nevertheless, I believe that the full potential of the project was not achieved because it was implemented in a way that could not be sustained.

Level of Focus/Analysis in Promoting Refugee Well-Being

Another issue is the tension that existed throughout the project: balancing efforts to eliminate refugees' distress through the reduction of individuals' barriers and problems versus elimination of the societal causes of the distress (Strawn, 1994). Particularly with refugees, who are usually survivors of numerous traumas and face multiple resettlement challenges, it is important to address their individual needs. However, a focus on larger social and system change, both in terms of the treatment of refugees in the United States and the dynamics that create ever-increasing numbers of refugees worldwide, also deserves attention. The Refugee Well-Being Project sought to reduce refugees' distress through attention to multiple levels of change. Although it was certainly a small step towards broader social change efforts, I hope by creating a space for learning to occur across different cultures, ages, experiences, languages, and races and providing opportunities for critical thought and collective action, that seeds of change have been planted. It is important to address these multiple levels both in developing effective interventions and in working towards fairer refugee resettlement policies and legislation that impacts the rights and benefits of refugees, immigrants, and other newcomers. This

is particularly relevant given recent legislation (e.g., USA Patriot Act), which continues to erode the civil liberties and rights of non-citizens in the United States.

Connecting University Resources to Communities

Universities have numerous resources, including human resources (e.g., faculty, students, and staff), intellectual resources (e.g., knowledge and research), and material resources. At the same time, university faculty and students have much to gain and learn from community members. Thus, it is important to focus on developing genuine partnerships, projects, and interventions that connect universities to the communities in which they are situated. In the Refugee Well-Being Project, bringing undergraduates and Hmong refugees together provided several advantages for promoting refugees' mental health, including lower cost to the community and less stigma for participants. In addition, the undergraduate students had important opportunities to learn from and with the Hmong families, to develop advocacy and teaching skills, to engage in experiential learning that allowed them to apply what they learned in the classroom, to develop critical awareness and work towards a more just society, to earn course credit for work in the community, and to acquire beneficial experience for graduate school or a career in human services. Therefore, it is important to continue to consider ways that university resources can be effectively applied to promote the well-being of their communities.

Refugee Women and Gender

Rumbaut (1989a) found that women play a pivotal role in Southeast Asian refugee families. Their socioeconomic and psychological well-being was significantly related to their children's academic success, while their husbands' were not. Furthermore, refugee women's psychological well-being predicted their husband's

depression at a later time but not vice versa. At the same time, Rumbaut found that Southeast Asian refugee women arrive in the United States with the fewest human capital resources, face more job discrimination and the main burden for child-rearing, and have significantly poorer health and psychological well-being than their male counterparts. These factors often “widen the ‘adaptive gap’ between the genders in the competitive American context” (p.172), which places refugee women at significant disadvantage. Thus, while the adjustment and well-being of refugee women is particularly important for the women themselves and for their families, refugee women often face the greatest challenges.

The Refugee Well-Being Project did not begin with an explicit focus on Hmong women; it was initially offered to all adults in the Hmong community. However, given that 26 of the 28 Hmong participants were women, it became primarily an intervention for Hmong women. This view was clearly shared by most participants who frequently talked about the program for “Hmong ladies,” particularly in the evening learning circle, which did not have any Hmong men in it. As evidenced in the interviews, gender was a salient issue for participants, both in terms of the gendered nature of the intervention and the ways that gender impacted Hmong women’s participation, and in terms of the exchange of information about gender and gender roles between Hmong and undergraduate participants.

The project was important because it created a setting for Hmong women in which they could control and direct what happened. They made decisions about what they wanted to learn and which resource issues they wanted to address. The learning circles were a time and space for them. This was evident by the comments of Hmong

participants who talked about how at other times they had to worry about their kids, their husbands, and their jobs, but the learning circles were their time. Monzel's (1993) narrative analysis of three Hmong women emphasized the lack of control and marginality they felt over their lives and attributed it to several conditions: 1) limited control over their personal lives as women in a patriarchal society, 2) experiences as refugees (war, forced to flee their homes), and 3) marginality as an ethnic minority without a homeland. Thus, it is particularly important for refugee women to have opportunities to gain or regain a sense of agency and control.

The learning circles also brought Hmong women together and brought them into contact with Americans to learn other new ideas. It is important to have a place for women to talk about community issues and their wants and needs. As Cha and Small (1994) point out, "refugee communities" are often considered a homogenous group in which a particular representative or representatives can speak. Their discussion of Hmong culture suggests that the formal leaders are always men and they most likely do not represent the views and interests of Hmong women. They emphasize the importance of allowing multiple voices and perspectives to be heard. Furthermore, they warn, "To reify some notion of the 'pristine Hmong culture' and not validate women's new interests and activities...fails to recognize the realities of Hmong life today, and may seriously hamper the efforts of Hmong people generally to secure the life they want for themselves" (Cha & Small, 1994, p.1055). Thus, they argue that the liberal idea of "cultural preservation" should be critically examined. Given that cultures themselves are dynamic rather than static and that the refugee experience in particular is a time of cultural and social change for many refugees (e.g., Light, 1992; Rumbaut, 1989a), it is

important that women have opportunities to be heard, to make their own decisions, and to be exposed to new ideas about gender roles and gender equality.

After the president and secretary of Hmong Women United of Michigan visited the learning circles to share their work with us, they decided that they wanted to start a project similar to the Refugee Well-Being Project for Hmong women in Detroit. This suggests that they found the project to be potentially useful and relevant to their needs and interests, as well as those of their community. As Cha and Small (1994) state, “Refugee women, who are concerned with the well-being of their families now and in the future, participate in programs based on their own careful assessment of the benefits of the program” (p.1050). They found that service providers in the refugee camps in Thailand did not try to understand why women did not participate in the programs that the service providers thought were most important. Rather than considering that the Hmong women might have rational reasons for their decisions, “they tended to attribute refugee behavior to the characteristics of women refugees and of Hmong culture, often general stereotypes including traits such as ‘backward,’ ‘rigid,’ and ‘ignorant’” (p.1051). Thus, this project demonstrates that it is important to question the structure of programs that may be ineffective or have low participation rates, rather than to shift responsibility to the supposed deficits or problems of individuals. This is particularly relevant for refugee women, whose ideas and interests are often overlooked because of their multiply marginalized positions.

Although the Refugee Well-Being Project began to create spaces and opportunities for Hmong women to direct their own learning, focus on their own interests, and transform their traditional ideas about gender and gender roles, it is

important to note that the Hmong women participants did not become totally independent of the larger gendered contexts in which they lived. For instance, there were a few women who were studying for the U.S. citizenship test but whose husbands would not allow them to send in their citizenship applications. In addition, it was evident from the interviews that one woman experienced a great deal of pressure from her in-laws not to study. There was another Hmong woman who missed two learning circles in a row. When one of the co-facilitators called her, she said she did not have a ride. We offered to pick her up and when I did, she told me in the car that her husband had said he would kill her if she took the car that morning to go to the learning circle. As Rumbaut (1989a) points out, adapting to life in the United States provides opportunities for elevation of women's status, but often at a significant cost because shifting power dynamics are often accompanied by marital and family conflict.

Given that refugee women often bear not only the double burden of gender inequality in their own culture and in their host country, but also the constraints of being a refugee, it is important to continually pose questions that disentangle the circumstances and interests of different refugees based upon their social location. While this focus must include gender; we must also pay attention to differences among refugees based upon class, race, and other axes of inequality. For all of these reasons, it is particularly important for practitioners to recognize that refugee communities are comprised of individuals with different interests and needs and to develop programs and services with this in mind.

Future Directions

There are several potential directions for future research. Five main issues emerged as the most important to consider: improving the sustainability of the model in order to foster the development of more permanent increases in well-being, community infrastructure, relationships within and across communities, and access to resources; involving multiple generations of refugees in this type of project to address prevalent intergenerational issues; creating projects with particular organization and focus around issues of refugee women; adapting the project to other refugee groups; and improving certain aspects of the structure within the current model.

Given that many of the positive impacts of the intervention were not sustained after the intervention and that the processes of individual and community empowerment were not taken to their fullest possible extent, I envision an on-going project involving learning circles and advocacy, in which community members participate as long as they would like. Thus, it is important to consider how this type of endeavor could be sustained and institutionalized within refugees' communities. An on-going partnership between universities and refugee communities and organizations, in which undergraduates make a two-semester commitment and refugee community members participate as long as they want is my idea. As such a project grew and social and material resources within the community developed, coordination and ownership could be increasingly shifted to the refugee community. However, many refugee communities have so few resources that it takes time to reach this ultimate goal. The Refugee Well-Being Project demonstrated that universities possess untapped resources that have great potential for improving the well-being of refugees and that undergraduates can be

effective change agents and engage in relationships with refugees and their communities that are mutually beneficial. Therefore, it seems that this model has great potential as one on which to build more sustainable interventions.

It is clear from both the literature on refugee adjustment and well-being and the comments and experiences of participants that intergenerational issues are particularly salient for many refugees. One of the powerful aspects of the learning circles at the Jane Addams School for Democracy in Minnesota is that they involve all generations – including young children, teenagers, parents, and elders. This provides opportunities for cultural exchange not only between refugee and undergraduate participants, but also across generations of refugees, so that parents and their children can learn from each other and appreciate the knowledge, experiences, and challenges that they possess. This structure also helps preserve certain aspects of newcomers' cultures across generations, while allowing for the transformation of other aspects. The Refugee Well-Being Project's combination of learning circles and advocacy has not been implemented with multiple generations of refugee families, but the issues raised by participants in the learning circles and interviews suggest that this is an important direction to pursue.

Another important direction for future research is to focus more explicitly on refugee women's issues and consciousness-raising and organizing around these issues. The structure of this intervention would fit well with this approach. By involving only women refugee and undergraduate participants and developing group work or action specifically around issues or problems identified by the women, participants could learn from each other and become more able to make decisions about what aspects of their

traditional cultures or gender roles they wanted to maintain or transform, and then engage in collective action together.

The Refugee Well-Being Project also has potential applicability to other refugee populations. Although the project was developed with particular attention to certain attributes of Hmong culture and the specific needs and interests of Hmong community members, the flexibility and individualized approaches inherent in both the learning circle and advocacy components of the project suggest that it could be easily adapted to other refugee groups. In particular, the structure of this project would be effective with other refugees who face great challenges to adjusting to life in the United States because of limited previous education and large cultural and language gaps and with relatively recent newcomers.

Finally, based upon the suggestions of Hmong and undergraduate participants, it is important to consider structural changes that would improve the current model of the Refugee Well-Being Project. The most frequent complaint was that the learning circles often had too much time focused on discussion with not enough time allotted for one-on-one learning. This has also been an issue in the learning circles at the Jane Addams School for Democracy. The cultural exchange discussions are an essential component of the intervention, but since participants have limited opportunities and time to study English and for the U.S. citizenship test, the multiple goals of the project may sometimes conflict. One idea might be to try to incorporate more U.S. citizenship information into cultural exchange discussions or to find other creative ways to address multiple goals at the same time. It is likely that participants would have effective suggestions for addressing this issue. Other issues are simpler to address, such as providing

undergraduates with more English as a Second Language (ESL) training and restructuring training so that undergraduate and refugee participants begin working with each other more quickly (rather than having two months of training for undergraduates during which they did not work with the refugee families at all).

Conclusion

Newcomers to the United States bring with them unique perspectives, skills, and traditions, which have the potential to make great contributions to our country. At the same time, the United States has become increasingly less receptive to refugees and immigrants, as evidenced by recent political, economic, and social trends. Therefore, the impetus to understand the processes through which refugees can thrive in the United States and become integrated and accepted into their resettlement communities, while maintaining their own cultural identities, is strong. The Refugee Well-Being Project sought to clarify and facilitate some of these processes. Given that it appeared to be successful in empowering Hmong participants, reducing their distress, improving their quality of life, and increasing their skills, knowledge, and access to resources, it suggests that attending to the exile-related stressors faced by refugees, providing opportunities for mutual learning and collective validation, and collaboratively developing interventions that are community-based and culturally-appropriate are important aspects of promoting refugees' well-being and creating more welcoming communities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LEARNING CIRCLE DISCUSSION TOPICS & ACTIVITIES

- Presidential elections of 2000
- Electoral college and the Bush/Gore election
- Purposes of learning circles and finding a partner
- Voting and discrimination in the United States
- Thanksgiving celebration and discussion of Thanksgiving in the United States, including what different people eat and why
- Comparison of the Bill of Rights and rights in Laos
- Herbs and traditional foods in Laos, Hmong agriculture
- Ideas about raising children in the United States
- Drugs/crime in the United States
- Winter vacation plans and the multiple winter holidays (Christmas, Hannukah, New Year)
- Holiday celebration
- Supreme Court decision instituting George W. Bush as President and the inauguration
- Fieldtrip to see President Clinton speak in Lansing
- Discussion of President Clinton's speech
- Unemployment in the United States and the reasons many community members were losing their jobs
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Birthdays in Hmong and American cultures
- Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. and the causes of social problems
- Guest speaker from Hmong American Community Youth Program, discussion of youth issues, causes of the issues, and services
- Economic recession and its causes
- Hmong participant's experience as a soldier in Laos, the promise the U.S. made to Laos, and life in Laos before coming to the United States
- Fieldtrip to Michigan Historical Museum
- Gender roles in Hmong culture and how to interact with Hmong men and women
- Current events in Laos
- Midpoint check-in on how learning circles are going and what participants want to change
- Hmong participant's journey from Laos to the United States
- Fieldtrip to Capitol Building in Lansing
- Valentine's Day Party
- President's Day
- Pregnancy in Hmong, American, and Mexican cultures
- College students, alcohol, and the MSU student riot

- Palm reading and fortune telling
- Medical beliefs in Hmong and American cultures
- Hmong Veteran's Act and Hmong soldiers' march in Washington, D.C.
- Genetic cloning
- Guest speaker union organizer to discuss unions and the rights of employees in the workplace
- Earthquake in Seattle
- Hmong folktales
- Undergraduates plans for spring break
- Stereotyping, how it feels, and why people do it
- Guest speakers from Hmong Women United of Michigan in Detroit to discuss their organization and their work to promote the rights of Hmong women
- Fieldtrip to MSU Museum
- Environmental issues, including Laos selling land to Thailand to cut trees, U.S. bombing in Laos and the destruction of land, and oil exploration in Alaska
- Interracial dating and marriage and different marriage traditions
- Easter
- Gardening
- Guest speak from Lansing City Clerk to demonstrate how to vote and give participants voter registration cards
- Bush's tax plan and discussion of whether it was fair
- Passover
- Sharing of Hmong, Japanese, and Mexican clothes
- Graduate Employees Union election at MSU
- Final wrap-up and sharing of experiences and feelings
- End-of-project picnic and graduation celebration at Francis Park

APPENDIX B

QUANTITATIVE INTERVIEW

ID# _____ DATE _____
TIME STARTED _____ TIME ENDED _____
INTERVIEWER _____
Revised 9/12/00

Section A – Demographic Information

A1. What is your marital status? SINGLE1
MARRIED2
DIVORCED3
WIDOWED.....4

A2. Gender: MALE1
FEMALE.....2

A3. How old are you? _____

A4. When did you move to Turner (Waverly)? _____ MONTH _____ YEAR

A5. When did you move to the United States? _____ MONTH _____ YEAR

A6. Where were you born? LAOS1
THAILAND2
UNITED STATES3
OTHER: _____4

A7. How many children do you have? _____

A7a. How many of your children live with you now? _____

A8. How many people live in your house? _____

A9. How many people who live in your house are over 18 years old? _____

A10. How are these people related to you?

A11. How many years of school did you have in Laos or Thailand? _____

A12. What language do you most often speak at home?

HMONG1
ENGLISH2

A13. What language do you most often speak outside your home?

HMONG1
ENGLISH2
OTHER: _____ 3

A14. Can you read Hmong?

NO0
YES1

A15. Can you write Hmong?

NO0
YES1

A16. How well can you speak English?

NOT AT ALL0
WITH SOME DIFFICULTY1
WELL2
LIKE A NATIVE3

A18. How well can you understand English?

NOT AT ALL0
WITH SOME DIFFICULTY1
WELL2
LIKE A NATIVE3

A19. How well can you read English?

NOT AT ALL0
WITH SOME DIFFICULTY1
WELL2
LIKE A NATIVE3

A20. How well can you write English?

NOT AT ALL0
WITH SOME DIFFICULTY1
WELL2
LIKE A NATIVE3

Section B – Community Participation

Now I'd like to ask you about your involvement in your community.

B1. In the last 3 months, how many resident council meetings have you attended? _____

B2. Did you vote in the last resident council election?

NO0
YES1

B3. How often have you been to the community center in the last 3 months?

NEVER0
ONCE.....1
ONCE A MONTH OR LESS2
ONE OR TWO TIMES A WEEK3
THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK4
MORE THAN FOUR TIMES A WEEK5

B4. What do you do at the community center? (check all that apply)

I DO NOT GO TO THE COMMUNITY CENTER.....1
USE THE COMPUTERS IN THE COMPUTER LEARNING CENTER2
ATTEND SPECIAL PROGRAMS OR EVENTS (I.E, THANKSGIVING
POTLUCK OR MARTIN LUTHER KING CELEBRATION).....3
STUDY ENGLISH4
ATTEND HEALTH EDUCATION CLASSES5
OTHER6
OTHER7

B5. In the last 3 months, how often have you helped out in the community here, things like watching your neighbors' kids, cleaning up around the neighborhood, helping translate for neighbors, things like that?

NEVER0
ONCE.....1
ONCE A MONTH OR LESS2
ONE OR TWO TIMES A WEEK3
THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK4
MORE THAN FOUR TIMES A WEEK5

B6. What specifically have you done?

B7. In the last 3 months, how often have you helped to plan or organize any events, services, or activities at the community center?

NEVER0
ONCE.....1
ONCE A MONTH OR LESS2
ONE OR TWO TIMES A WEEK3
THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK4
MORE THAN FOUR TIMES A WEEK.....5

B8. In the last 3 months, how often have you donated time or materials to help with events or services at the community center?

NEVER0
ONCE.....1
ONCE A MONTH OR LESS2
ONE OR TWO TIMES A WEEK3
THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK4
MORE THAN FOUR TIMES A WEEK.....5

B9. What community organizations, if any, are you involved in?

B10a. Please describe your involvement:

B10. Are you a U.S. citizen?
NO.....0
YES.....1

B10a. (IF YES) Did you vote in the last election?

NO.....0
YES.....1

B11. Have you taken part in or organized a demonstration in the last 3 months?

NO.....0
YES.....1

B12. Have you written a letter to any government official in the last 3 months?

NO.....0
YES.....1

Section C – Access to Resources

C1. In the last 3 months have you been employed?

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| | YES.....1 |
| (GO TO #C2) | NO.....2 |

(IF YES, ASK:)

C1a. Are you employed right now?

| |
|-------------------------|
| YES.....1 |
| NO.....2 |
| (Not Applicable)8 |

C1b. What type of work do/did you do?(IF EMPLOYED IN LAST 3 MONTHS)

C1c. Do/did you work part-time, full-time, or sporadically (off and on temporary)? (FULL-TIME = 35 HOURS PER WEEK OR MORE)

| |
|-------------------------|
| PART-TIME1 |
| FULL-TIME2 |
| SPORADICALLY3 |
| (Not Applicable)8 |

C1d. Does/did your job include any fringe benefits such as medical insurance, retirement, sick time, etc.?

| |
|-------------------------|
| YES.....1 |
| NO.....2 |
| (Not Applicable)8 |

C2. In the last 3 months, have you wanted or needed to get a job (or a different job)?

| |
|-------------------------|
| NO/NONE.....1 |
| A LITTLE2 |
| SOMEWHAT3 |
| VERY MUCH.....4 |
| (Not Applicable)8 |

C3. In the last 3 months, have you tried to get a job (or a different job)?

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| | YES.....1 |
| (GO TO #C4) | NO.....2 |

C3a. How difficult was it to get a job?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C4.If you wanted or needed to get a job (or a different job) in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4

(ASK EVERYONE, WHETHER OR NOT EMPLOYED)

C5. How do you feel about your employment situation? Using this green card, would you say you feel:

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
 DISSATISFIED1
 SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED2
 MIXED3
 MOSTLY SATISFIED4
 SATISFIED.....5
 VERY SATISFIED.....6

C6. In the last 3 months, have you wanted or needed to return to school?

YES1
NO.....2

C7. Are you currently a student?

(GO TO #C7a) YES1
(GO TO #C8) NO.....2

C7a. Part-time or full-time?

PART TIME.....1
FULL TIME.....2
(Not Applicable)8

C7b. What degree are you working on?

| | |
|---|---|
| GED | 1 |
| HIGH SCHOOL..... | 2 |
| ASSOCIATE'S (2-yr./community college) | 3 |
| BACHELORS..... | 4 |
| OTHER (.....)..... | 5 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

C7c. How difficult has it been to go to school?

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL..... | 1 |
| A LITTLE DIFFICULT..... | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT | 3 |
| VERY DIFFICULT | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

C8. What's your educational level now?

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL | 1 |
| HIGH SCHOOL GRAD/GED..... | 2 |
| TRADE SCHOOL GRADUATE | 3 |
| SOME COLLEGE (no degree)..... | 4 |
| ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE (2-year)..... | 5 |
| BACHELOR'S DEGREE (4-year) | 6 |
| GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE..... | 7 |

(SKIP IF CURRENTLY A STUDENT)

C9. If you wanted or needed to return to school in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL..... | 1 |
| A LITTLE DIFFICULT..... | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT | 3 |
| VERY DIFFICULT | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

(ASK EVERYONE)

C10. How do you feel about your current educational level? Using this green card, would you say you are:

| | |
|---|---|
| (SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED | 0 |
| DISSATISFIED | 1 |
| SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED | 2 |
| MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED) | 3 |
| MOSTLY SATISFIED | 4 |
| SATISFIED | 5 |
| VERY SATISFIED..... | 6 |

C11. Over the last 3 months, how difficult have money issues been?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C12. In the last 3 months, has your family received food stamps, SSI/SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare, or other government assistance?

(GO TO #C13) YES1
NO.....2

C12a. In the last 3 months have you had a loss/cut in your government benefits?

YES, LOST BENEFITS1
YES, BENEFITS CUT2
NO LOSS OR CUTS3
(Not Applicable)8

C12b. What happened?

C12c. In the last 3 months how difficult has it been to deal with your government assistance?

(GO TO #C14) NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
(GO TO #C14) A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
(GO TO #C14) SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
(GO TO #C14) VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

(ASK ONLY PEOPLE NOT ON GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE)

C13. If you needed to get government assistance in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C14. How do you feel about the amount of income you have, or the amount of money you get? (ASK EVEN IF RESPONDENT HAS NO INCOME)

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED) 3
MOSTLY SATISFIED4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6

C15. Do you have regular access to a car?

YES1
NO2

C16. In the last 3 months, how difficult has transportation been for you?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4

C17. How do you feel about your physical health right now?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED) ...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6

C18. In the last 3 months, have you wanted or needed medical care for yourself?

(GO TO #C20) YES1
NO2

C18a. In the last 3 months, have you tried to get medical care or assistance for yourself?

(GO TO #C20) YES1
NO2
(Not Applicable)8

C19. How difficult was getting medical care?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT.....3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4
(Not Applicable)8

C20. Do you have health insurance for yourself?

YES.....1
NO.....2

C21. Do you have health insurance for your children?

NONE.....1
SOME.....2
ALL.....3

C22. In the last 3 months, did you actually receive medical care for yourself?

YES.....1
NO.....2
(Not Applicable)8

C23. How did you feel about the medical care you received?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED.....0
DISSATISFIED.....1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED.....5
VERY SATISFIED.....6
(Not Applicable).....8

C24. If you wanted or needed medical care for yourself in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT.....3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4

C25. In the last 3 months, have you wanted or needed to work on legal issues?
 YES1
 NO.....2
 (GO TO #C28)

C25a. What specifically is going on?

C26. Have you worked on any of these issues in the last 3 months?
 YES1
 NO.....2
 (Not Applicable)8
 (GO TO #C28)

C26a. Have you needed an attorney to work on these issues in the last 3 months?
 YES1
 NO.....2
 (Not Applicable)8
 (GO TO #C27)

C26b. (IF YES), did you get one?
 YES1
 NO2
 (Not Applicable).....8

C27. How difficult has it been working on these issues?
 NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
 A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
 SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
 VERY DIFFICULT4
 (Not Applicable)8

28. How difficult do you think it will be to deal with legal issues if they come up in the future?
 NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
 A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
 SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
 VERY DIFFICULT4

C29. Do you have someone to help you watch your children or do you take care of them yourself?

YES, HAVE CHILDCARE.....1
NO, TAKE CARE OF OWN CHILDREN.....2

C29a. (IF YES), How do you feel about the amount and quality of childcare and you have?
(IF NO), How do you feel about not having childcare or someone to help you take care of your children?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED.....0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6
(Not Applicable).....8

C30. How difficult has dealing with childcare or taking care of your children been for you in the last 3 months?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C31. How difficult do you think childcare or taking care of your children will be for you in the future?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL.....1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT.....2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C32. In the last 3 months, have any of your children needed health care? By health care, I mean any medical care, dental care, or counseling?

(GO TO #C37) YES.....1
NO.....2
(Not Applicable)8

C33. In the last 3 months, have you tried to get health care (medical or dental care or counseling) for any of your children?

(GO TO #C37) YES1
NO2
(Not Applicable)8

C34. How difficult was getting health care for your child(ren)?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE BIT DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C35. In the last 3 months, did you actually get health care for your children?

(GO TO #C37) YES1
NO2
(Not Applicable)8

C36. How did you feel about the health care your children received?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED) ...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6
(Not Applicable)8

C37. How difficult do you think it will be to get healthcare for your children in the future?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4

C38. In the last 3 months, have you had to deal with any school issues for any of your children?

(GO TO #C40) YES1
NO2
(Not Applicable)8

C38a. What issues have these been?

C39. How difficult was dealing with these school issues?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable).....8

C40. How do you feel about your children's current school situations?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED) ...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6
(Not Applicable)8

(ASK EVERYONE)

C41. If you have to deal with school issues in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4

C42. In the last 3 months, have you had to deal with any non-school issues for any of your children?

(GO TO #C44) YES1
NO2
(Not Applicable)8

C42a. What issues have these been?

C43. How difficult was dealing with these non-school issues?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT4
(Not Applicable)8

C44. How do you feel about the how your children are doing overall?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6
(Not Applicable).....8

(ASK EVERYONE)

C45. If you have to deal with non-school issues in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4

C46. In the last 3 months, have you worked on trying to become a U.S. citizen for you or a family member?

(GO TO #C48) YES1
NO2
(Not Applicable)8

C46a. For whom? _____

C47. How difficult was dealing with these citizenship issues?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4
(Not Applicable).....8

C48. (IF CITIZEN), How do you feel about being a U.S. citizen?

(IF NOT CITIZEN), How do you feel about not being a U.S. citizen?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6
(Not Applicable).....8

C49. If you have to work on citizenship for you or your family in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4

C50. In the last 3 months, have you worked on trying to find a different place to live?

(GO TO #C52) YES.....1
NO.....2
(Not Applicable)8

C51. How difficult has trying to find a different place to live been?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4
(Not Applicable).....8

C52. How do you feel about where you're living right now?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED.....0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6

C53. If you have to work on trying to find a different place to live in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL1
A LITTLE DIFFICULT2
SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT3
VERY DIFFICULT.....4

C54. In the last 3 months, have you worked on getting any services or things for your house and family like furniture, food, clothing, or getting appliances fixed?

(GO TO #C56) YES.....1
NO.....2

C55a. What have you worked on getting?

C55. How difficult was getting these things?

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL..... | 1 |
| A LITTLE DIFFICULT..... | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT | 3 |
| VERY DIFFICULT | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

(ASK EVERYONE)

C56. If you have to deal with getting these types of things in the future, how difficult do you think it would be?

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL..... | 1 |
| A LITTLE DIFFICULT..... | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT | 3 |
| VERY DIFFICULT | 4 |

Section D – PWB

Please answer the following questions in terms of this ladder.

NEVER0
 A LITTLE1
 SOMETIMES2
 A LOT3

| <i>During this past month...</i> | |
|---|---------|
| D1. How often have you felt so sad, discouraged, hopeless, or that you had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D2. How often have you been under, or felt you were under, strain, stress, or pressure? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D3. How often have you felt happy, satisfied or pleased with your present life? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D4. How often have you been waking up in the morning feeling fresh and rested? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D5. How often have you been bothered by any illness, bodily disorder, pains, or fears about your health? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D6. How often has your daily life been full of things that were interesting to you? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D7. How often have you felt down-hearted and blue? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D8. How often have you felt emotionally stable and sure of yourself? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D9. How often have you felt tired, worn out, and used-up or exhausted? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D10. How often have you felt full of energy and vitality? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D11. How often have you felt cheerful and lighthearted? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D12. How often have there been some things that you have found yourself thinking about all the time? | 0 1 2 3 |
| D13. How often would you say that you use laughter and a sense of humor in dealing with life's problems? | 0 1 2 3 |

Section E – SLA

On the whole, with regard to each of the following areas of your life, how pleased or satisfied are you right now?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED0
 DISSATISFIED.....1
 SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
 NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED3
 SOMEWHAT SATISFIED4
 SATISFIED5
 VERY SATISFIED6

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E1. Work | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E2. Money | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E3. Homelife | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E4. Social contacts generally | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E5. Housing and neighborhood | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E6. Health | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E7. Religion | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E8. Your children | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| E9. Recreation, relaxation | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Form C

BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST

ORAL INTERVIEW SECTION

INTERVIEWER'S BOOKLET

Name _____
Date of Test _____
Testing Site _____

Examiner _____

| | Raw | Scaled |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Listening Comprehension | △ | _____ |
| Communication | □ | _____ |
| Fluency | ○ | _____ |
| Total | | □ |
| Pronunciation | 1 2 3 | |
| Reading/Writing | ○ | |

CAL

*For complete BEST measure contact the Center for Applied Linguistics,
1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037

Section G – Citizenship Knowledge

- G1. What do the stars on our flag mean?
- G2. What is the 4th of July?
- G3. Who is the vice president of the United States today?
- G4. What is the Constitution?
- G5. What are the three branches of our government?
- G6. How many representatives are there in Congress?
- G7. For how long do we elect each Senator?
- G8. How many terms can a president serve?
- G9. What is the highest court in the United States?
- G10. Name 3 rights or freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

Section H – Intervention Questions

Questions at Mid-Interview:

H1. What have you been learning in the Learning Circles with _____?

H2. What do you like best about the Learning Circles?

H3. Is there anything you would change about the Learning Circles?

H4. What else have you been working on with _____ (e.g., getting a job, buying a house)?

H5. How are things going overall with _____? Are there things that you wish were different or that could be improved?

Questions at Post-Interview:

Now I'd like to talk about the project – both the learning circles and the volunteer you worked with.

H1. Overall, how satisfied are you with this project?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED.....0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6

H2. How satisfied are you with the learning circles?

(SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED.....0
DISSATISFIED1
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....2
MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)...3
MOSTLY SATISFIED.....4
SATISFIED5
VERY SATISFIED6

H3. Would you say the learning circles were too big, right size, or too small (# of people)?

TOO BIG1
RIGHT SIZE2
TOO SMALL3

H4. Would you say the learning circles were too long, right amount of time, or too short?

TOO LONG.....1
JUST RIGHT.....2
TOO SHORT.....3

H5. As you know, we usually had 30 to 45 minutes of discussion time and 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1½ hours of one-on-one learning time in the learning circles. Would you that you would have liked more of the learning circles to be discussion time, that the time for each part was just right, or that you would have liked more one-on-one studying time?

MORE DISCUSSION TIME1
JUST RIGHT.....2
MORE ONE-ON-ONE STUDYING TIME3

H6. How satisfied are you with your volunteer _____?

| | |
|---|---|
| (SHOW PINK CARD) VERY DISSATISFIED | 0 |
| DISSATISFIED | 1 |
| SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED..... | 2 |
| MIXED (EQUALLY SATISFIED & DISSATISFIED)... | 3 |
| MOSTLY SATISFIED..... | 4 |
| SATISFIED | 5 |
| VERY SATISFIED | 6 |

H7. What was most helpful about working with your volunteer _____?

H8. What was least helpful or most difficult about working with _____?

H9. What issues did you work on with _____?

- _____ Housing
- _____ Education
- _____ Transportation
- _____ Employment
- _____ Legal issues
- _____ Citizenship
- _____ Physical health issues for self
- _____ Health care or insurance for your children
- _____ Financial issues (other than getting a job)
- _____ School issues for children
- _____ Activities or other issues for children
- _____ Childcare
- _____ Getting things like furniture, clothing, appliances, cable
- _____ Anything else _____

H10. What do you think you achieved through being a part of this program?

H11. What are the most important things you learned from being a part of this program?

H12. Do you think that your comfort in your community here has changed?

| | |
|------------------|---|
| NOT AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT | 3 |
| A LOT | 4 |

H12a. If so, how?

H13. Do you think that your ability to participate in your community here has changed?

| | |
|------------------|---|
| NOT AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT | 3 |
| A LOT | 4 |

H13a. If so, how?

Now I'd like you to think about the whole project – both the learning circles and your volunteer.

H14. What was the best thing about this project?

H14. What was not helpful or was difficult about this project?

H15. Some people in other states are talking about trying to start a similar project and we would like to know your advice about that. For instance, would you do things the same or differently? How could this project be improved?

H16. Finally, the last question is a general one. How do you feel about your life in the United States now?

APPENDIX C

INITIAL RECRUITMENT INTERVIEW

NAME _____ PHONE # _____
ADDRESS _____
DATE _____

LEARNING CIRCLE CHOICE (circle one): Morning (10-12noon) Evening (6-8pm)

Now that we've told you a little about the project, we'd like to know a little bit about you to help us make the project helpful to you and your family.

1. When and how did you leave Laos? Where did you live in Thailand? For how long?

2. When did you come to the United States? What was your resettlement experience like here?

3. How many times have you moved (houses or places) here in the United States total?
How many different places (cities) have you lived in the United States?
4. How do you feel about your life in the United States right now?
5. What has been most difficult about life in the United States?
6. What has been best about life here?
7. How comfortable do you feel in this community? Are you able to participate as much as you want? Why/why not?

8. What are things that you might want to study or learn in the Learning Circles?

_____ English
_____ Citizenship test
_____ Job application/interviewing skills
_____ Math
_____ Other _____

9. Advocates help families with many different things. What are some issues you might want help with from your advocate?

_____ Housing
_____ Education
_____ Transportation
_____ Employment
_____ Legal issues
_____ Citizenship
_____ Physical health issues for yourself
_____ Health care or insurance for your children
_____ Financial issues (other than getting a job)
_____ School issues for children
_____ Activities or other issues for children
_____ Childcare
_____ Getting things like furniture, clothing, appliances, cable
_____ Anything else _____

10. What do you think are important issues or problems you or other Hmong people in the Lansing community face?

APPENDIX D

PAIRED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR HMONG AND UNDERGRADUATE PARTICIPANTS

Basically, we wanted to have the opportunity to sit down and talk together about what the experience of working together in this project has been like for both of you. This is a chance to think back over the last six months you have spent working together and with us and the other people in the group. I have several questions to help direct the conversation, but feel free to add ideas or other thoughts that you have.

1. First of all, what were your expectations of this project? What did you each hope to get out of it?
2. Has your involvement in the project met your expectations? How so? How not?
3. What is the most important thing you learned from _____? From others in the group?
 - a. Did you learn anything new about what it is like to be an American?
 - b. Did you learn anything new about what it is like to be a newcomer to this country?
4. What is the most important thing you taught _____? Others in the group?
5. What else have you learned from being a part of this project?
6. What were the best things about working together?
7. What were the most difficult things about working together?
8. What else would you like to tell _____?
9. What else would you like to us about the project?
10. If we were to do this project again, how do you think we should change it?

APPENDIX E

WEEKLY PROGRESS REPORT

Report #

Volunteer's Name

Date

I. WHAT WERE YOUR PLANS FOR THIS WEEK? (What did you hope to accomplish?)

II. WHAT DID YOU ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISH?

III. HOW DID YOUR ACTIVITIES AND PLANS FIT INTO YOUR LONG-RANGE GOALS?

IV. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR NEXT WEEK? (What do you want to accomplish?)

1. Intervention week you are reporting on. (Use 2 digits) _____
2. Total number of hours you worked on your case during the past week. _____
3. Number of hours of direct face-to-face contact with your adult. _____
4. Number of hours of direct face-to-face contact with your family. _____
5. Number of times you spoke to family on phone. _____
6. Number of Learning Circles adult #1 attended this week. _____
7. Number of Learning Circles adult #2 attended this week. _____

8. PLEASE INDICATE WHETHER YOU WORKED IN THE FOLLOWING
ADVOCACY AREAS DURING THE PAST WEEK.

ADULTS

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ___ housing | ___ employment | ___ transportation |
| ___ childcare | ___ healthcare | ___ finances (besides employment) |
| ___ education | ___ social support | ___ goods/services |
| ___ legal | ___ issues for kids (not childcare) | |
| ___ citizenship | ___ other (specify): _____ | |

CHILDREN

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| ___ academic performance/school attendance | ___ recreational |
| ___ family | ___ locating mentor for child |
| ___ social support | |
| ___ other (specify): _____ | |

9. Mark the **number of times** you did any of the following this week:

- ___ Discussed options of how to obtain resources with adult(s).
- ___ Looked at written material (i.e., newspaper, phone book, brochure) for resources.
- ___ Talked to potential resource provider on phone.
- ___ Talked to potential resource provider in person.

10. How do you feel about what you
accomplished with your family
this week?

- ___ Very satisfied
- ___ Satisfied
- ___ Somewhat satisfied
- ___ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ___ Dissatisfied
- ___ Very dissatisfied

11. How do you feel about the communication
between you and the Hmong adult(s) you
are working with this week?

- ___ Very satisfied
- ___ Satisfied
- ___ Somewhat satisfied
- ___ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ___ Dissatisfied
- ___ Very dissatisfied

APPENDIX F

ADVOCATE QUESTIONS

The following are questions about how the project has gone with your family. These questions are for research purposes only. They will not be reviewed until after your grades have been submitted. In addition, these questions are linked to you only by the id# of the family with whom you worked. It is important to the research part of this project that you answer these questions as honestly and accurately as you can.

1. On average, how many hours a week would you say you spent with (Woman)_____ in person? (INCLUDE LEARNING CIRCLE TIME)

(NUMBER OF HOURS) _____
2. On average, how many hours a week would you say you spent with (Family)_____ in person? (INCLUDE TIME SPENT WITH THE WOMAN AND HER FAMILY TOGETHER)

(NUMBER OF HOURS) _____
3. How many times a week did you see the woman and/or her family on average? (INCLUDING LEARNING CIRCLES).

(NUMBER OF VISITS) _____

These next questions are about what you have been working on over the last 6 months. They cover many areas, including housing, education, transportation, employment, legal issues, citizenship, health care, social support, financial issues, school issues for children, activities or non-school issues for children, child care, and material goods and services. You may not have worked on all of these areas but please read each question carefully and answer them all. DO NOT LEAVE ANY QUESTIONS BLANK. IF YOU DID NOT WORK ON A PARTICULAR AREA, CIRCLE "NOT APPLICABLE " OR "N/A" WHERE APPROPRIATE.

4. In the last 6 months, have you worked on trying to find your family somewhere to live? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:
- | | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

5. Was housing something (W)_____ had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES1
NO.....2

5a. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

5b. What did you and (W)____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

6. In the last 6 months, have you worked on anything to do with education for (W)_____, such as returning to school? (NOT INCLUDING LEARNING CIRCLES). For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

7. Was education something (W)_____ had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES1
NO.....2

7a.(IF YES) What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|-----|
| OBTAIN GED/FINISH HIGH SCHOOL | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| ATTEND JUNIOR/COMMUNITY COLLEGE..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| OBTAIN A TUTOR | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| ATTEND TRADE SCHOOL | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| OTHER (.....)..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |

7b. How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area?
Would you say:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE EFFECTIVE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE | 3 |
| VERY EFFECTIVE..... | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

7c. What did you and (W)_____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

8. In the last 6 months, have you worked on anything to do with transportation? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

9. Was transportation something (W)_____ had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

| | |
|-----------|---|
| YES | 1 |
| NO | 2 |

9a. (IF YES) What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|---|--------|---------|-----|
| LEARNING BUS ROUTES/HOW TO TAKE BUS | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| GETTING BUS PASSS..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| LEARNING TO DRIVE..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| BUYING A CAR..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| FIXING A CAR..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |
| OTHER (.....)..... | 1..... | 2 | 8 |

9b. How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE EFFECTIVE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE | 3 |
| VERY EFFECTIVE..... | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

9c. What did you and (W)___ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

10. In the last 6 months, have you worked on any employment issues? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| FILL OUT JOB APPLICATIONS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE A RESUME | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

11. Was employment something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES.....1
NO.....2

11a. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

11b. What did you and (W)____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

12. In the last 6 months, have you worked on any legal issues? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| TALK TO A LAWYER | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

13. Were legal issues something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES.....1
NO.....2

13a. What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|-----|
| LEGAL SEPARATION/DIVORCE..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| ALIMONY/CHILD SUPPORT..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| CHILD CUSTODY | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| EMPLOYMENT ISSUE..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| HOUSING ISSUE | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OTHER (.....)..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |

13b. How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE EFFECTIVE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE | 3 |
| VERY EFFECTIVE..... | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

13c. What did you and (W)____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

14. In the last 6 months, have you worked on any citizenship issues for her? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| FILL OUT/SEND CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION | 1..... | 2 |
| (date sent:_____) | | |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

15. Were citizenship issues something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES1
NO..... 2

- 15a. What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|--|--------|--------|-----|
| APPLYING FOR CITIZENSHIP FOR SELF..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| APPLYING FOR CITIZENSHIP FOR HUSBAND..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| APPLYING FOR CITIZENSHIP FOR CHILDREN..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| CHECKING STATUS OF APPLICATION | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| STUDYING FOR CITIZENSHIP TEST..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OTHER (.....) | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |

- 15b. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

- 15c. What did you and (W)____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

16. In the last 6 months, have you worked on any physical health issues for her? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

17. Were health issues something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES1
NO..... 2

17a. What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|---|--------|--------|-----|
| OBTAINING HEALTH INSURANCE FOR SELF | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OBTAINING FAMILY DOCTOR..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| MAKING DOCTOR/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| ATTENDING DOCTOR/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| COMMUNICATING WITH DOCTORS..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| PURCHASING MEDICINE | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OBTAINING EYE GLASSES | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OTHER (.....)..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |

17b. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

17c. What did you and (W)___ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

18. In the last 6 months, have you and (W)_____ worked on any health issues for her children? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

19. Were health issues for her children something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES1
NO2

19a. What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|--|-----|----|-----|
| OBTAINING HEALTH INSURANCE FOR KIDS | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| OBTAINING FAMILY DOCTOR..... | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| SCHEDULING DOCTOR/DENTAL APPTS FOR KIDS . | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| ATTENDING DOCTOR/DENTAL APPTS FOR KIDS.... | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| COMMUNICATING WITH DOCTOR..... | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| PURCHASING MEDICINE | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| OTHER (.....) | 1 | 2 | 8 |

19b. How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area?

Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

19c. What did you and (W)_____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

20. In the last 6 months, have you and (W)_____ worked on getting her more social support or making friends? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1 | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1 | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1 | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1 | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

21. Was social support something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?
- YES1
NO.....2

21a. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

21b. What did you and (W)___ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

22. In the last 6 months, have you worked on any financial issues, or ways of getting money other than by employment, such as government assistance (including food stamps, cash assistance), borrowing money, or obtaining a scholarship? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

23. Were financial issues something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

YES1
NO.....2

23a. (IF YES) What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|---|--------|--------|-----|
| APPLYING FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| TALKING TO CASEWORKER ABOUT ASSISTANCE.1..... | 2..... | 8 | |
| GETTING A LOAN FROM BANK/INSTITUTION | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OTHER (.....) | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |

23b. How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE EFFECTIVE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE | 3 |
| VERY EFFECTIVE..... | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

23c. What did you and (W)____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

24. In the last 6 months, have you worked on getting any services or things for her house or family, like furniture, food, clothing, cable hookup, or getting appliances fixed? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

25. Were any of these things something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

| | |
|-----------|---|
| YES | 1 |
| NO..... | 2 |

25a.(IF YES)What specifically had she wanted or needed to work on in this area?

| | YES | NO | N/A |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|-----|
| OBTAINING FURNITURE..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OBTAINING FOOD (e.g., WIC). | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OBTAINING CLOTHING..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OBTAINING BABY SUPPLIES | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |
| OTHER (.....)..... | 1..... | 2..... | 8 |

25b. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals in this area? Would you say:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL | 1 |
| A LITTLE EFFECTIVE | 2 |
| SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE | 3 |
| VERY EFFECTIVE..... | 4 |
| (Not Applicable) | 8 |

25c. What did you and (W)_____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

26. In the last 6 months, have you worked on child care issues? For instance did you and/or (W)_____:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

27. Was child care something she had wanted or needed to work on over the last 6 months?

| | |
|-----------|---|
| YES | 1 |
| NO..... | 2 |

27a. (IF YES) How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
 A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
 SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
 VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
 (Not Applicable)8

27b. What did you and (W)___ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about what you have done with (W)_____ 's kids.

28. Advocates helped kids with all kinds of things, anything from tutoring programs to behavioral issues with teachers or other kids. What, if anything, did you work on with any of the kids? Did you:

| | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| a. get a tutor for kids | 1 | 2 |
| b. help kids with homework | 1 | 2 |
| c. talk to a teacher | 1 | 2 |
| d. talk to a school counselor | 1 | 2 |
| e. talk to principal | 1 | 2 |
| f. attend parent/teacher conference..... | 1 | 2 |
| g. help kids get in a school program | 1 | 2 |
| h. help (C)_____ with sports or sports program | 1 | 2 |
| i. help (C)_____ get in a non-school program | 1 | 2 |
| j. anything else?_____ | 1 | 2 |

28k. How effective have your efforts been in helping the kids? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

28l. What did you actually accomplish with and for the kids? Please describe:

29. In the last 6 months, have you worked on any other issues that haven't been mentioned?

YES1
(Describe: _____)
NO.....2

29a. (IF YES) What specifically did you and/or (W)_____ do in this area?
Did you:

| | YES | NO |
|---|---------|----|
| DISCUSS THIS | 1..... | 2 |
| MAKE PHONE CALLS | 1..... | 2 |
| OBTAIN WRITTEN MATERIALS/CHECK NEWSPAPERS | 1 | 2 |
| CONTACT ANY AGENCIES | 1 | 2 |
| GO ANYWHERE IN PERSON | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

29b. How effective have your efforts been in accomplishing her goals? Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

29c. What did you and (W)_____ actually accomplish in this area? Please describe:

30. In the last 6 months, what have you and (W)_____ worked on during learning circles?

| | YES | NO |
|-----------------------------------|---------|----|
| STUDYING ENGLISH | 1..... | 2 |
| STUDYING FOR CITIZENSHIP TEST | 1..... | 2 |
| STUDYING MATH | 1 | 2 |
| FILLING OUT JOB APPLICATIONS | 1 | 2 |
| LEARNING TO WRITE CHECKS | 1..... | 2 |
| STUDYING FOR GED | 1..... | 2 |
| LITERACY (READING/WRITING) | 1..... | 2 |
| WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO IN THIS AREA | 1..... | 2 |
| (explain:_____) | | |

31. How effective have you been in helping (W)_____ learn in the learning circles?
Would you say:

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4
(Not Applicable)8

32. How effective would you say you were in helping the family overall, that is, how effective would you say you were overall as an advocate?

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4

33. How effective would you say the program was in helping (W)_____ become more independent?

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4

34. How effective would you say the program was in helping (W)_____ become more able to accomplish her goals?

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL1
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE2
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE3
VERY EFFECTIVE.....4

35. How satisfied have you been with the program overall? Would you say:

NOT SATISFIED AT ALL1
A LITTLE SATISFIED2
SOMEWHAT SATISFIED3
VERY SATISFIED.....4

36. This class requires that you spend 6-8 hours a week working in the community.
Would you say this is:

TOO MUCH TIME.....1
A GOOD AMOUNT OF TIME.....2
NOT ENOUGH TIME.....3

- 36a. How many hours a week would you say you put in for this class?

NUMBER OF HOURS _____

37. Was the course worthwhile for you?

DEFINITELY1
SOMEWHAT2
A LITTLE3
NO.....4

38. Would you recommend the course to your friends?

DEFINITELY1
PROBABLY2
PROBABLY NOT3
DEFINITELY NOT4

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