A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE HMONG EXPERIENCE IN THE

UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Capella University

Add Month Year (of conference approval)

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Hmong students regarding the Upward Bound Program and how those perceptions related to their participation in the program. A critical ethnography of Hmong students in the Upward Bound Program was conducted and included an examination of potential inequities by creating a literal dialogue with the participants in the program. The study was guided by three research questions: (1) What is the dominant narrative for Hmong students who participate in the Upward Bound Program? How are the challenges of marginalization embedded in the narrative? (2) How does the Upward Bound Program currently provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization? (3) Based on the narratives of the Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization? A qualitative design was used with seven Hmong students who participated in the Upward Bound Program at a university in Wisconsin. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group were used to collect data for the study. Findings of the study indicated that the Hmong students who participated in the Upward Bound Program did experience issues of marginalization outside of the Upward Bound Program. Hmong students believed that the Upward Bound Program is an effective tool in teaching students empowerment to stand up for their individual rights. Other results indicated that there were gender-related issues of marginalization that were unique to the Hmong community and may have an effect on participation in school and the Upward Bound Program. Based on these findings, it is recommended that marginalization coping strategies be added to the curriculum of the Upward Bound Program.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wife, Tenja, and my children, Terrence, Ephriam, Brandon, Fiona, Allison, Katherine, Alysia, and Tannika. I could not have accomplished this without your patience and love. I also would like to dedicate this to Jasymn and Silas, who were taken from us far too soon.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to personally thank my mentor, Dr. Stephen O'Brien. Over the course of the development of this study, I have truly benefited from the guidance and steadfast leadership that you provided to me. You guided my steps and ensured in every way that this dissertation was both to standard and meaningful. I am especially grateful to my committee members, Dr. Cheryl D. Bullock and Dr. Dennis Flood, whose patience and comments gave focus to my work. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Bee Vang, director of the Upward Bound Program and the students of the Upward Bound Program, without whom this study would not have been possible. Thank you for allowing me to tell your story.

As with many things in life, a dissertation is a collective effort. I am so very grateful to Dr. Jacqueline Dansby, director of the Upward Bound Program in San Antonio, who always had faith in my abilities. Her personal example has stayed with me all my life. I would also like to thank my students, faculty, friends, and Dawn Herring, who always supported my plans and told me to "finish." Your support provided me with more than enough motivation to complete what I started. Finally, to my cohort members Dr. Harriet Thompson and Dr. Shaun Newton, thanks for being there; your friendship through the process was invaluable.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

This chapter offers an introduction to a study that was intended to describe and

explain the perceptions of Hmong students concerning the Upward Bound Program.

Much of the research concerning the Upward Bound Program has focused on whether

students are successful at colleges and universities; however, it has not addressed

deeper issues, such as the perceptions of Hmong students in relation to what they

think of the Upward Bound Program, which can help educators determine why

students choose to stay in or drop out of programs like Upward Bound.

Determining why Hmong students choose to stay in an academic program is

an ongoing challenge. Any particular program that assists high school administrators

in lowering the achievement gap or aids administrators in providing appropriate

student services should be researched in order to better understand student motivation

(Erbe & Holloway, 2000; Field, 2007a; Roach, 2006). Also important is examining

other issues, such as community-related barriers like assimilation and accommodation

that may affect Hmong student participation in an academic program. Thus, reviewing

the background of the Hmong population is first in order.

History of the Hmong

The Hmong have been stereotyped as a people who could not be brought into

typical civilization dating back to ancient Chinese records. From as early as the 27th

century BC, the Hmong appeared in Chinese history as a group who burdened

Chinese expansionism in the basins of both the Yellow River and the Hoai (see Figure 1; Ranard, 2004).
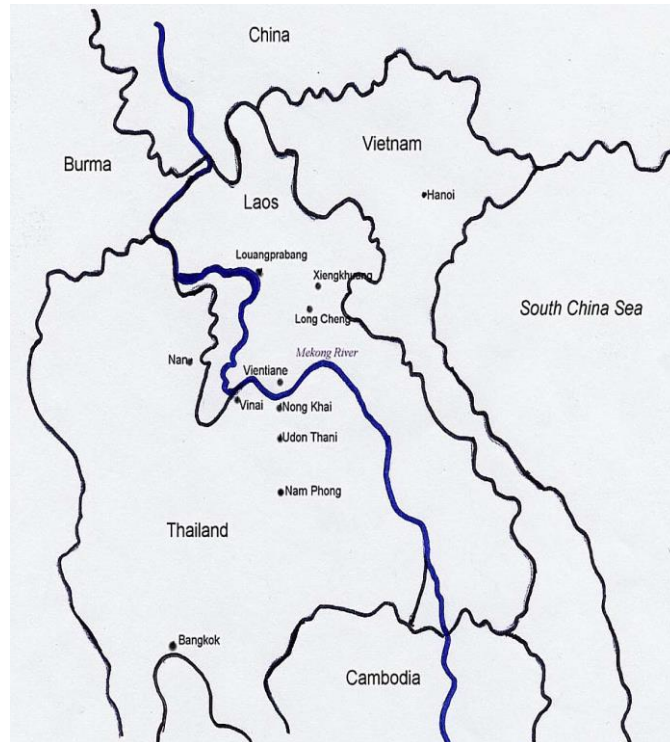
Figure 1. Homeland of the Hmong.

The Hmong were typically portrayed by Chinese as attackers and poor barbarians, which was why the Chinese decided to punish them. Whenever the Hmong were subjugated, strict measures were taken to divide them and pull them under Chinese rule. In the year 2247 BC, Chun, the mythical emperor, separated the San-Meau (Hmong) into different tribes in order to distinguish them from the other people. These tribes were provided land, which they were supposed to cultivate. Homes and villages were overseen by Chinese officials. Chun set apart the families and, in short, neglected nothing in order to bend them gently under the yoke (Quincy, 1988).

In reality, the Hmong are a peaceful people who were inadvertently caught in a war that they were neither responsible for nor interested in. Being a minority for many generations, they developed a stalwart sense of self-reliance. As a minority in Laos, the Hmong were denied accessibility to education, technology, resources, and political power for many generations. Hmong refugees from different age groups offer a look at the struggles of Laotian immigrants. The addition of the entire life story serves to put their immigration into context, relating immigration as a necessity rather than a choice.

Social Structure of the Hmong Clans

The Hmong typically use patrilineal system with *father-right* as the norm. The belief is that male is the head of the family and the male members of the family will stand for him if he is not present or after his death. The belief is that the males have the decision making authority for the household. The father's wishes are to be respected by junior males and the female associates of the group. Accordingly, young married men are expected to live in the house of their father or any senior male member who has paid for their wedding expenditures. The objective of this is to have a way for the younger members to repay the debt with their services but in particular to show the necessity for the wives to be included into the husbands' parental household. Family members are expected to guide and assist the newly married in their marital duties. After a father has died, his widow will normally raise the children among his male relatives and with the latter's aid in order to maintain the patrilineal group (Cooper, 1998). Smith and Beardsley (2004) described this term as a system of continuity of a corporate group known commonly as a family. As soon as one of the male children is old enough to act as head of the family, the mother will not lead the

family as much and will allow her son to fulfill the male duties expected of him. Although such a young man may still be single, he is judged to be satisfactorily mature for such a role when he shows signs of leadership and a sound decision-making ability. It is commonplace that "the married woman among the Hmong not only loses every connection with the group from which she is descended, but also after her death her soul rises again in the next child of her husband's family" (Millet, 2002, p. 180). The belief in this form of reincarnation is not accepted by all Hmong, but there is complete understanding that after marriage, a woman belongs exclusively to the spiritual world of her spouse in that only followers of his ancestry may offer sacrifices to her life after her demise. Her inclusion in their familial line, however, does not mean that she is no longer of her blood relations' clan since she maintains her former clan name. Should she be divorced or widowed, she may return to her relatives but must live separately, as only people with the same religious system can inhabit the same house.

Women are not entrusted with the continuation of the family line; the most that can be hoped from female offspring is their labor assistance. Couples that do not have sons may try to adopt them or may compromise their monogamy by allowing the husband to marry a second wife in the hope that she will bear male offspring to take care of the parents during old age or provide them with offering after they are dead. The aspiration for males may be strong, but it does not lead all parents to prefer sons to daughters in practice (Yang, 2008). For instance, where the sons are incapable or unwilling to add to the parental household, parents may care more about their daughters and sons-in-law. Variation exists where physical distance and cultural divergence are involved.

Hmong shared relationships consist of ties within the family, the family line, or marriage (Hmong Today, 2001). The extended household is the smallest component of Hmong social structure, and the most important psychologically for the family in terms of their commitment to one another. A home may consist of more than one generation, as well as a man married to more than one woman. The Hmong refer to inhabitants living in the same household as "one house people" and look upon them as "the strongest category of relationships" in their culture (Cooper, 1998, p.119).

The Hmong in La Crosse, Wisconsin

According to Barr (2005), in 1974, the first Southeast Asian refugees settled in La Crosse, Wisconsin. It was a Vietnamese family of five. In 1975, the first Cambodian family settled in this area. The first Hmong refugees arrived in June of 1976. The first Hmong family to come to the La Crosse area consisted of four brothers. To meet the needs of the increasing immigrant population, the La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association (HMAA) was created and incorporated as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization in December of 1982. The mission of the agency is to serve as an educational and altruistic organization assisting immigrants in adjusting to life in the United States. The La Crosse County Refugee Task Force combined with the HMAA Advisory Board in 1987 to form the Refugee Resource Board. The Refugee Resource Board is still in existence, along with the Community Attitudes Task Force, Multicultural Youth Council, Employers Advisory Group, Elderly Advisory Council, Key States Initiative Interagency Coordination Group, Western Wisconsin Family Strengthening Initiative Regional Advisory Council, Legal Alien Hunger Committee, FACET Advisory Board, and HMAA Youth Council, all sponsored by the HMAA. During the past decade, the HMAA has

become known as a multicultural organization promoting appreciation for diversity and advocating for the civil rights and culturally sensitive service of minority groups. In the first years of the community programs, there was not a great emphasis on educating the community about how the Hmong supported the United States in various actions. As the Hmong population grew to more than 10,000 in the city of La Crosse, more information was disseminated from the Hmong leadership, resulting in greater levels of acceptance.

Ranard (2004) suggested that there are varying levels, or sub processes, of assimilation. These sub processes include acculturation, structural assimilation, and marital assimilation. Acculturation takes place when a minority or immigrant group becomes familiar with the dominant group's behavior or set of behaviors, which could include language, culture, and values. Structural assimilation occurs when a minority or immigrant group becomes included in formal communal, political, economic, and other cultural institutions. As the Hmong have entered the La Crosse area, they have had to deal with stereotypical ideas of what they are supposed to be like and able to do. The La Crosse Hmong Center has successfully allowed Laotian refugees to present their perspectives and feelings on their immigration and goals in America, contesting the stereotypical views held by many in the La Crosse region at the time of their arrival. It is interesting that most of the challenges faced by the Hmong immigrants in America were depicted by Dia's storycloth, as the Hmong do not have a written language of their own (Cha, 2002). Through the use of a storycloth, learning English and becoming familiar with American customs allows Asian immigrant children to assimilate easier into American culture and feel more accepted.

The Hmong American community is not a geographical or ecological system community but rather a cultural and ethnic community without geographical

boundaries. The Hmong community is undergoing the process of socialization in the La Crosse, Wisconsin area. Hmong Americans have brought with them their unique historical and oppressed minority experiences that have no exact ethnic parallel to any prior immigrant group. They have had to adapt to America from the bottom up (Yang, 2008).

The Hmong community faces many challenges in the form of assimilation into the American culture while trying to work with the La Crosse community to accommodate their own cultural values. After more than two challenging decades, the majority of Hmong youth in the La Crosse area have now identified themselves as Hmong Americans, emphasizing their cultural and ethnic identity as a combination of Hmong and American. Bosher (1995) studied Hmong American students' self-perceptions of their identity and found that the majority of Hmong students in her study identified themselves as Hmong Americans and that these students have a great desire to retain their Hmong heritage. The findings also indicated a strong desire in the Hmong American community to assimilate into the American culture. There is an emerging Hmong American linguistic and cultural identity, which merits further research attention. Inui (1998) studied the Hmong in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and discovered that the Hmong have acculturated to the community, gradually becoming Hmong Americans. Inui's findings also indicate that most Hmong do not have any yearning to permanently return to Laos.

Duchon (1997) conducted an ethnographic study that indicated that there were two types of employment in the La Crosse, Wisconsin area: high- and low-skilled jobs. Very few Hmong have the skills or educational background to apply for the high-skilled jobs, and they are required to compete with other minority groups (Latinos) for the low-skilled and seasonal jobs. Many Hmong in the La Crosse area

continue to use their farming skills, but their farming skills have not been compatible with agribusiness in La Crosse, where there is a limited a growing season.

The Hmong Americans have displayed the capacity to adapt well in many characteristics of their new lives in La Crosse. However, there is still a gap between Hmong and American cultures. Being moved thousands of miles away from the only home the Hmong have ever known to an area where the ambient temperature for the year is 67 degrees has been quite a challenge. Moving from an area where there is relatively limited access to schools or medical care to an area where children are required to attend schools and there are different aspects of medical care available has produced several challenges as well. This gap in cultures is very large, and it is generally outside the assimilation skills of most Hmong to rapidly bridge the gap.

The Hmong have also encountered barriers such as language difficulty, along with the challenges of fitting into a society where agricultural standards and typical work are much different. First-generation Hmong members have had the greatest challenge in terms of learning how to pass along to the next generation their specific values and customs. Ironically, even though education is highly valued by Asian migrants, the American educational system serves to contradict much of the parental instruction and tends to erode the Asian identity they wish to maintain. As Yang (2008) indicated, "The children of today have no respect for their elders and do not fear their parents. Americans do not understand our culture, and we do not understand theirs." While Hmong Americans have enjoyed many success stories achieved during the last two decades, there are many challenges and barriers that they must overcome in order to achieve the American dream.

The Hmong have an intense commitment to members back in their homeland. In Laos, and later in America, the Hmong immigrants worked and lived together to

establish an economic safety net. As indicated by Yang (2008, p.21), "We live like poor people but are happy and do not envy others. I have so many grandsons, relatives, and friends; it is hard for me to become wealthy." In the face of racism, language, and cultural assimilation barriers, Hmong immigrants, much like Vietnamese and other Asian immigrants, created communities of Laotians who could encourage each other with counsel, financial assistance, and information while supporting the education of their children as a means of upward mobility. The second-generation children became a gauge of success, and their acclimation to American society is essential to the future of the Hmong in the United States (Yang, 2008).

In the La Crosse area, there is still significant prejudice against the Hmong people, though many people are reaching out to them. There are small groups of people who think of the Hmong as a threat. Yang (2008) indicated, "I had a nasty phone call from a veteran of the Vietnam War, for example, who was angry with me for defending "the guks that fought us in Vietnam."" The veteran had mistakenly thought the Hmong people were North Vietnamese. In truth, the Hmong were a great ally of the United States in the Vietnam War. Ignorance is one of the problems that resulted from the secrecy of the United States' operations in Laos during the Vietnam War. The sacrifices of the Hmong people for America have not been fully realized, and unawareness of their contributions tends to make it easier for racial tensions to grow. Whatever problems the Hmong people face from some Caucasians should not denounce all of them or make Hmong people vigilant about forming friendships outside of their background. Racial segregation, however, is a challenging problem. Some Hmong people tend to want to connect with other Hmong members or other Asians for friends and appear nervous around Caucasians, and the same propensity applies to many Caucasians as well. There is a need for more social ties across the

cultures, more friendships and partnerships between all races. Pertaining to the Hmong people, timidity around Caucasians may hinder them from the kinds of associations and networking that may be essential for success in American life. To be able to reach out and develop more friendships, regardless of race and cultural differences, is a significant goal for the Hmong community.

Background, Context, and Theoretical Framework

Over the past few years, educators have begun to focus on cultural differences that could result in difficulties for students in learning environments, such as differences in value systems between poverty-level needs and middle-class needs (Abelev, 2009). However, programs developed to reach diverse populations and address the particular needs of their groups may not be as productive as originally thought. In addition, these programs do not always maintain accurate counts of students who are unable to remain in the programs (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2009). Without continued academic support services, Hmong students will continue to be at greater risk of not staying in school.

Students from economically disadvantage households or from families living at the poverty level may decide to leave school in favor of a GED so that they can enter the workforce. The number of students taking the GED has risen steadily since 1977, with the highest year being 2001 with 648,000 students (NCES, 2009). Testing changes occurred in 2002, and 464,000 students passed the GED in 2006. The GED is effective for entrance into the workforce; and unlike the past, the GED can qualify the student for a basic college education as an adult learner (American Council on Education, 2009).

However, the primary objective in developing a talented and qualified workforce within the United States begins with students being able to enter and graduate from a postsecondary institution at younger ages. It is essential to reach a greater population of high school graduates and increase the availability of a postsecondary education to all students. Unfortunately, not all states and school districts are able to put the same focus into increasing student access to college-related information, due to such things as budgetary shortfalls and socioeconomic constraints (Bartindale, 2006).

Addressing the needs of first-generation students in high school are the federal TRIO programs, which surfaced out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in reaction to President Johnson's War on Poverty. The Upward Bound Program was first in 1964, with Talent Search in 1965 and Student Support Services in 1968. The TRIO programs were designed with the goal of providing opportunities and equality to students through the increased availability and awareness of college degree programs. The Upward Bound Program is one of eight programs under TRIO that are designed to increase the number of students successfully completing a high school education and enrolling in a postsecondary program. The other programs now under TRIO include Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science (UBMS), and Veterans Upward Bound (Curtin & Cahalan, 2005; Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009). However, the main programs for high school students include Upward Bound and UBMS. TRIO is not the only agency from the U.S. Department of Education (USDoE; 2009a) that operates a program developed to increase high school graduation and college enrollment. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for

Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a program designed to reach out to lower-income students and includes scholarships for college; it is managed by the Teacher and Student Development Programs Service (USDoE, 2009b).

The Upward Bound Program was designed to support students in preparing for college, including encouraging precollege performance and the successful pursuit of college enrollment. Potential participants in the Upward Bound Program are evaluated for involvement based on requirements that include income level where the student's family qualifies based on state and federal regulations for low-income families and family situations where neither parent holds a bachelor's degree.

Upward Bound is dedicated to providing students with access to tutoring, counseling, mentoring, cultural enrichment, and work-study programs; the program also provides academic instruction in mathematics, laboratory sciences, composition, literature, and foreign languages. Specifically, Upward Bound provides student assistance with the following: the primary English skills of reading and writing, study skills and time management skills, subjects or topics identified as postsecondary-focused student skills, diverse opportunities for youth to explore worldly interests such as cultures and languages, the ability to access tutors or be a tutor, counseling services, entrance exam studies, college or financial aid paperwork, and even career-ready studies and interests based on specific student or local area needs identified by project managers or other educators (USDoE, 2008b).

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 extended and amended the Higher Education Act of 1965 to include assignment of the authority of the Office of Post-Secondary Education (OPE) programs and Federal Student Aid programs as statutory (USDoE, n.d.). Regulations that have influenced the administration and funding of Upward Bound and other similar programs have included Title 34, Code of

Federal Regulations, Part 645, and Education Department General Administrative Regulations. As a TRIO program, both the TRIO administrators and the Office of Management and Budget provide guidance concerning objectives. Finally, the USDoE is dedicated to reviewing the success of the students in the program, analyzing statistics on the program, and ensuring that funding is appropriately distributed (USDoE, 2008a).

The need to close the achievement gap of minority and economically disadvantaged students has been demonstrated in minority retention statistics as well as college graduation statistics. Educators are challenged to meet this need, and programs such as Upward Bound and GEAR UP have been developed to assist high schools and to create opportunities for learning and college awareness. In some cases, colleges develop the programs in order to create interest in their college. Rawlings acknowledged the importance of these cooperative programs between high schools and colleges, noting that "this is a transitional phase for students. They get a taste of college life. It helps students not only academically, but socially also. It helps them to build confidence and helps develop them to come into their own" (as cited in Johnson, 2009, p. 1). In addition, students from the programs frequently have positive things to say. One student commented, "I think that the programs help us not only by tutoring and with grades, but it also helps open our minds to other things" (as cited in Johnson, 2009, p. 1).

Funding for programs such as Upward Bound has been under strict evaluation over the past few decades (Moore, 1997). During 2005 and 2006, consideration was given to completely removing Upward Bound as well as other programs in order to provide additional funding for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Act because it had been expanded to include high school students (Field, 2007b; Viadero, 2007).

Operation Rolling Thunder was created to undo actions taken by the second Bush Administration that appeared to be leaning toward scientifically proving that Upward Bound was not effective (Field, 2007b). Recently, however, these programs have become important in helping reduce the impact of the recession and developing a talented workforce that can compete in international markets (Baldwin & Borrelli, 2008).

President Obama indicated that communities, teachers, administrators, and the family of the student should be held accountable for student success. Recognizing the importance of an educated workforce, he stated, "We will prepare the next generation for success in college and the workforce, ensuring that American children lead the world once again in creativity and achievement" (as cited in Organizing for America, n.d., p. 1). Most politicians have agreed that addressing the varied needs of student education and providing encouragement to achieve higher education is of the utmost importance. Proposed solutions include expanding needed grants to low-income families and making available tax credits that recognize hard work and dedication to continued education. The focus is on improving preparation as well as increasing the availability of education for everyone (Organizing for America, n.d.). In understanding the reasons for participation or nonparticipation in the Upward Bound Program, administrators of Upward Bound will be able to make adjustments, additions, or other changes to improve student services, and high school principals will be able to gain a greater understanding of some of the challenges that minority students face in terms of actively participating in a program such as Upward Bound.

Many college preparatory programs are believed to be student-focused. Programs such as Upward Bound recognize underrepresented students based on a conventional set of criteria. The students are offered a host of academic assistance and

support services designed to overcome the students' obstacles to academic achievement and prepare them for achievement in college (Loza, 2003). Other types of programs for students are school-focused, where the effort is concentrated on the reorganization of academic services for the entire school with the goal that all the schools' graduates are equipped for a college education (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2002).

The theoretical basis for programs such as Upward Bound leans toward Cultural Capital Theory (Cerna, Perez, & Saenz, 2007). Cultural Capital Theory proposes that the beliefs and values of a student, including the very behaviors of a person, are fashioned by the individual's standing in a society. Many educational organizations are cultivated from a middle-class viewpoint and consequently function from a standpoint that is more acceptable to middle-class students and their families (Bourdieu, 1977). Upper-class and middle-class students are professed to have a benefit over low-income students, who may be less prepared to do well in school. High schools tend to focus on middle-class ideals, and this plausibly leads to a method of education that is expected to result in the students' experiencing success (McLauren, 1994). However, students who are part of a low-income community have to learn to traverse a social structure that is not designed for their cultural value system. This difference may cause people to perceive that a middle-class student environment is normal and children of low socioeconomic status are abnormal. The Upward Bound Program tries to focus on this challenge by providing students with the academic resources and training needed for success in college.

Statement of the Problem

It is not known how Hmong students' perceptions of the Upward Bound Program affect their participation in the program. There has been a gap in the research regarding how Hmong students view the Upward Bound Program. Since there is very limited research regarding how Hmong students view the Upward Bound Program, it is important to conduct research that allows for a better understanding of their opinions.

Upward Bound Program directors find themselves having to make adjustments for students' academic decisions. In terms of challenges relating to the achievement gap, directors need to be aware of all factors that may impact the decision-making process of students, including economic issues, social challenges, or emotional needs. Given the complexity of academic challenges in high schools across the United States, important questions surface in regards to perceptions of the Upward Bound Program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Hmong students regarding the Upward Bound Program and how those perceptions relate to their participation in the program. A critical ethnography of Hmong students in the Upward Bound Program was conducted and included an examination of potential inequities by creating a literal dialogue with the participants in the program. An investigation of issues of marginalization may assist Upward Bound Program directors in recognizing areas of needed improvement, identify the risk factors for the participants in Upward Bound, and contribute to the body of knowledge influencing the development of the Upward Bound Program.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions designed from a critical ethnography standpoint that sought to identify the perceptions of Hmong students who were in the Upward Bound Program at one location in central Wisconsin at the time of this study. The research questions for the study were:

R_1: What is the dominant narrative for Hmong students who participate in the Upward Bound Program? How are challenges of marginalization embedded in the narrative?

R_2: How does the Upward Bound Program currently provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization?

R_3: Based on the narratives of Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization?

This research contributes to the body of knowledge that supports administrators in making decisions about the programs that will be available to students. Understanding the contributing factors of time spent in the program as well as student opinions of the program can assist educators in designing effective programs.

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The need to retain Hmong students in Upward Bound is essential for increasing talent in the U.S. workforce. Adolescents and young adults able to complete their degree programs early are more likely to be successful in finding jobs that contribute to the success of the economy at an age where their contribution is not influenced by other needs, such as young children or elderly parents. These

advantages can assist younger adults in accomplishing higher income goals and remaining active members of the workforce (Duncan, 2010).

The development of the Upward Bound Program was a result of trying to correct a national deficiency in academic preparation and lower educational aspirations of minority students. The results of this study provide valuable insights for individuals interested in learning about a national program that prepares first-generation college students for the demands of college. Despite its being a national program, high school administrators may lack exposure to what the Upward Bound Program may do for their minority and/or first-generation students. This study provides a connection between the perceptions of Hmong students to determine if there are areas where the Upward Bound Program can better serve the needs of the students and in doing so support the mission of high schools in graduating students who are ready for college.

In addition, this study provides information to individuals regarding factors that influence Hmong student participation in the Upward Bound Program and that can have an effect at the high school level. More specifically, the study reveals to program administrators what areas are important to the students in the program, what aspects may need a greater focus, and how the students themselves perceive the program. It is important to understand the values and ideas that have helped students who completed the Upward Bound Program achieve their goals, and this knowledge may assist program administrators and high school administrators in developing stronger approaches that address the needs and concerns of future students.

Nature of the Study

This study employed qualitative tools in order to answer the aforementioned

research questions. Many minority students, including low-income students, across the United States find it difficult to follow the current academic programs of study (Barton, 2003; see Appendix A). Programs such as Upward Bound operate to bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary institutions and introduce students to the notion of self-discipline, increased proficiency in study habits, and access to college resources. Self-esteem, another goal of Upward Bound, is necessary for success, as asserted by Trautwein, Ludtke, Marsh, and Nagy (2009): "Students' academic self-concepts are not fully determined by their relative position in school, but also reflect their beliefs about the relative standing of their school" (p. 856).

Hmong students enrolled in the Upward Bound Program were asked to participate in one focus group and a semi-structured interview to gain a greater understanding of the lived experience. To garner a complete picture of the lived experience, the study also included an interview with the Upward Bound director. This effort was aimed at easing triangulation of the results with these different perceptions. Boyles' (2000) model for student retention was used in this study (see Appendix B). The model supports Tinto's (1993) model of student retention (Draper, 2008; see Appendix C).

Definition of Terms

There are a number of terms that are important to this study. As such, the following terms are operationally defined:

Achievement via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID is one of many programs developed to enable high school students to work toward college placement and college credits while in high school; this program assists students in achieving their college goals (Orange County Department of Education, 2007).

Clan. Hmong members with the same surname.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). GEAR UP, a college outreach program similar to that of Upward Bound, begins with students in Grade 7 and works with them through high school; the program includes scholarships for students from low-income families (USDoE, 2009b).

General Educational Development or General Equivalency Diploma (*GED).* The GED allows students to complete testing that demonstrates knowledge equivalent to that of students completing a high school education (GED, 2005).

High School Equivalency Program (HEP). HEP was developed to help the children of migratory or seasonal farm workers complete their GED and find work training or prepare for college admission (USDoE, 2009c).

Hmong. An Asian group from Laos, possessing their own culture, language, norms, and moral standards.

Lineage. Members of a Hmong community who have the same surname, have common ancestors, and practice the same rituals.

Limited English proficient students and English language learners (*LEPs and ELLs).* LEPs and ELLs are defined as federally protected students whose first language is not English.

Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs). Community-based refugee organizations. Also known as the Hmong Association.

Meo. The given name for the Hmong in Laos.

Minority attrition. Minority attrition refers to the number of minority students who complete high school and continue on to college degree programs (Green & Forester, 2003).

NCLB of 2001. The NCLB Act was enacted by Congress in 2002 to cover the perceived needs of disadvantaged students and their families in regard to educational needs and achievement gaps; it was specifically designed to increase accountability and establish parameters that require accountability, flexibility, and choices for schools (NCLB, 2002).

Patrilineal. Clans modeled on the Chinese surname groups. Whereas more than 400 clans exist, only 20 surnames exist (Cooper, 1998).

TRIO programs. The TRIO programs are federal programs designed to provide services to families and individuals "from disadvantaged backgrounds" and include Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff, Upward Bound, UBMS, and Veterans Upward Bound (USDoE, 2009a).

Upward Bound Program. The Upward Bound Program is one of the TRIO programs designed to enable first-generation college students from low-income households to achieve goals of higher education, decrease dropout rates, and increase interest in college degree programs (USDoE, 2008c).

Upward Bound Math-Science (UBMS). Similar to Upward Bound, this TRIO program was established to promote college education and advanced learning in students who may not have had the opportunity to learn from these types of experiences before. It operates in nearly all the same ways as Upward Bound; however, it has established objectives to meet the needs of a primarily math and science objective in learning and development (USDoE, 2008b).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following assumptions were present in this study:

1. An Upward Bound Program director's knowledge of supporting academic services is an important factor in determining the opportunity for Hmong students to participate in programs such as Upward Bound.

2. All information gathered is without bias from sources such as peer-reviewed or government agencies.

3. Students who choose to participate in this study qualified for admittance to the Upward Bound Program as specified by income guidelines.

4. The Upward Bound Program works with students from a broad, diverse cultural background, which will add substance to this study.

The following limitations were present in this study:

1. The large body of information available for this topic is not exclusive to the Upward Bound Program.

2. Available information is not based wholly on evidence relating to educational theories or retention strategies identified in other benchmarking areas.

3. A number of organizations have evaluated the needs of specific locations rather than a countrywide viewpoint of educational needs for retention.

4. The employment of junior- and senior-level students may impact the students' participation.

5. A high school's extracurricular activities may impact the participation of students in the Upward Bound Program.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study; the problem statement; the purpose of the study, which includes the rationale and research questions; the significance of the study; the assumptions and delimitations; and the definitions of the most important terms used in this study. Included in Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on the Upward Bound Program and Hmong community, as well as studies on the success of Upward Bound and UBMS. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology that was used to conduct the research and also addresses such key issues as theory, participants, and methods used to gather information. Within Chapter 3 are the descriptions of the sources of data, the data collection process, and collection functions. The chapter also includes information pertaining to procedures that were followed for the protection of human subjects. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study. The findings are presented for each research question. The information in Chapter 4 is based on an analysis of the information gathered from the qualitative inquiry described in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 includes a synopsis of the study, an abridgment of the findings from Chapter 4, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Upward Bound is designed to address the needs of students in high school who may not have the opportunity to attend college. These needs are defined by specific factors that are considered at-risk variables, such as having parents who did not attend college and being members of families living in poverty (USDoE, 2008b). Programs such as Upward Bound were created to address the problem of lower graduation rates and lower college attendance rates recognized by such researchers as Egeland, Hunt, and Hardt (1970). The initial goals of these programs included introducing students to college benefits, maintaining higher learning with individual course-related work, and engaging in interactions with educators. Concerns have been raised over how successful these programs have been in accomplishing the goals that they were designed for, and if they have not been successful, which aspects of the programs have been the least successful (Bennett et al., 2004; Olsen et al., 2007; Roach, 2006).

Tinto's (1975) model of student retention is the most commonly used model to identify retention (Drew, 1990). This model views retention as the product of the successful social and academic integration of the student. The successful integration of a student is believed to increase the ability of that student to succeed in the goals of the program, particularly to accomplish completion of the Upward Bound Program (Draper, 2008). Upward Bound aims to address the needs of social and academic integration and promote retention and college enrollment based on these needs; for example, students can visit colleges to learn more about the postsecondary learning environment.

Similar to Tinto's (1993) revised model is Boyles's (2000) model, which includes environmental variables that describe the sense of belonging and appreciation as the primary motivations for persistence in educational aspirations leading to student retention. As aspects of success, these variables must be carefully evaluated to recognize why students choose to continue to use the services of the Upward Bound Program. Items considered valuable to academic integration include academic performance, development, and self-esteem, along with personal growth and development as an individual, enjoyment of courses or subjects and enjoyment of studying a specific course or subject, norm and value identification, and, finally, role identification as a student (Draper, 2008). Draper also identified social integration needs as the number of friends a person has, whether the number of friends is important for social relationships to the person, whether the individual feels that needs and identity match those of the friendships, personal contact with academics, and personal interaction with staff members of the school.

Theoretical Framework

The proposed research will be based on a model of relationships dealing with the Cultural Capital Theory. French Scholar Pierre Bourdieu (1977) developed this theory, which describes the function and structure of schools in France. In this description, Bourdieu proposed that schools wanted their students to have experienced the same cultural events and activities in relation to the structure of class. It was proposed that students who have knowledge of being in a higher class structure and culture are able to converse with their teachers, have the ability to answer distinct questions, and have the ability to write about their experiences in specific papers. Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory is distinctly known for research that has to do

with power in social structures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1998). Carter (2003) indicated *cultural capital* refers to an individual's background pertaining to his or her attitudes, skills, and knowledge. Bourdieu (1977) created the concept of cultural capital with the focus being on educational research. Bourdieu postulated that there are three areas of cultural capital: educational qualifications, which relate to institutionalization; objectification, which relates to cultural goods; and embodied capital, which relates to the disposition of the mind and body. Bourdieu and Passeron (1998) argued that in the educational setting, individuals convey a set of dispositions to the interactions within the scope of educational understanding. It would seem that some forms of capital are valued at a higher level than other forms. In the valuing of different forms of cultural capital, there is a struggle that develops. There is the struggle to define the rules of the game, which is differentiated by an ambiguous set of rules or the hidden curriculum that is not explained. Lareau and Weininger (2003) concluded that the interpretation of the dominant culture of the cultural capital in educational research is insufficient. They suggested that Cultural Capital Theory stresses micro-interactional processes that students will either learn to comply or fail to comply with concerning the dominant social structures in schools.

Pertaining to how social class and individual resources affect the individuals in educational settings, Cultural Capital Theory provides a foundation of fact that many schools are not operating on an equal setting. Carter (2003) proposed that students with lower socioeconomic status were more likely to study less, be employed more to support their homes, and be less involved in school activities. Bourdieu and Passeron (1998) conceptualized that there are specific differences that embody a particular culture pertaining to the dominant cultural group. Bourdieu's specific indication was dominant and non-dominant areas of cultural capital. High status and

powerful attributes provide individuals with specific signals and codes, while for members of the non-dominant group, the focus is more on understandings and types of appreciation.

Cultural Capital Theory posits that society is designed to strengthen those who have increased cultural opportunity. Bourdieu and Passeron (1998) suggested that by use of Cultural Capital Theory, individuals are using economic means of maintaining privilege and class status. The general indication was that individuals who have greater access to these cultural opportunities will convey those prospects to their children. The perception that cultural capital is received in a positive manner influences the people who are in a higher socioeconomic status. Individuals with means seek to keep power and privilege in an effort to remain with the elite of society. Bourdieu (1977) also suggested that in applying Cultural Capital Theory to education, he wanted to clarify the different scholastic achievement of students from diverse educational but comparable social foundations. The belief is that success in school is more directly related to cultural capital inherited from a person's family than from accomplishment or from individual aptitude (Swartz, 1997). In understanding Cultural Capital Theory, Bourdieu saw the associations between language and cultural experiences. A richer vocabulary with different meanings was dependent upon the ability of the family to transmit the information to its children. Bourdieu believed that the economic difference between communities works in conjunction with the educational system to institutionalize the interactions between rich and poor. Wessel (2005) believed that the members of society that have money are more likely to create important experiences that build cultural capital. The families that fall in the lower economic scale have less of an opportunity and experience different settings, which in turn restrict the chances for attainment of experiences that contribute to cultural

capital. Cultural Capital Theory does not focus on trying to solve the challenges of society as a whole, but it does provide an avenue of recognition for individuals to co-exist within the framework of the dominate culture.

In this study, the use of Bourdieu's (1977) ideas pertaining to social and academic outcomes provided a unique opportunity to examine the perceptions of Hmong students regarding the Upward Bound Program.

Review of Research on Methodological Literature

Many high schools throughout the country have been allotted a set amount of money per student to fund their school. According to the Texas Education Agency (2009), in Texas, the legislature gave every Texas school district $275 per student to improve the graduation rates and increase college readiness amongst students. Robert Scott, commissioner of education in Texas, evaluated schools in Texas to find districts that accomplished these goals and offered students "exceptional" services that guided them in completing high school and in completing college readiness programs. Specific achievement goals are used for each of the Texas school districts, which are rated by the Texas State Board of Education on their successful ability to meet strategic goals during each school year. These goals are similar to other state goals and include the improvement of curriculum and transition programs that allow for student needs to be met, both through classroom education and the availability of support staff as needed. Specifically, high schools are tasked with preparing students for continued education, ensuring that students graduate at a standard of education that makes them employable, and with providing resources for struggling students.

The primary objective of the strategic goals is to recognize districts meeting or exceeding the initiatives of Upward Bound as well as the objectives of the NCLB Act.

Working with these objectives helps to align the needs of the districts and the federal requirements for education, which are top priorities for performance-based achievement ratings. In addition, these state awards motivate schools to increase their performance and allow parents and other stakeholders to recognize the success that these programs can provide for the students in need (USDoE, 2008b).

Every year, the USDoE develops a performance budget and includes strategic goals for the upcoming year. Strategic goals developed for the 2009 report included objectives for education, teacher quality, learning environments, curriculums, and more (Bullock, Freedman, D'Arcy, Easley, & Mbindyo, 2006). Specifically, the strategic goals developed and provided for review included three strategic goals and the objectives of each goal.

U.S. Department of Education Strategic Goal 1

Strategic Goal 1 was designed to address the needs of student achievement, particularly in a perceived need to improve the reading and mathematics levels of students to be equal to the standards assigned for each individual grade level; the goal states these needs must be met by 2014 (USDoE, 2008c). There are seven objectives defined to ensure success of this goal. The first objective focuses on achievement in reading, and the second objective focuses on achievement in mathematics, based on grade-level needs and with a primary directive toward standardized improvement; however, to achieve these objectives, additional objectives were required and designed to address the primary goals.

The improvement of teacher quality was listed as objective three and addresses the perceived imbalances in teacher quality across the program (USDoE, 2008c). The quality of education, and the ability to promote higher learning, is

dependent on a number of factors; however, the need for quality educators is paramount to the programs' success. In objective four, the safety, discipline, and drug-free need for education is addressed and includes building positive experiences through safe schooling environments; this objective addresses the fact, as recognized in many motivational studies including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs that students thrive in environments that are safe, as they reduce negative influences that could lead the program off course. The fifth objective is based on extensive studies over the past few decades that demonstrate that parental involvement is essential to the success of students; the objective stipulates that parents will be better notified of the happenings of the school, the student, and the requirements of the teachers. Specifically, this objective notes that since the 1990s, many educational studies have suggested that success in school is related directly to parental involvement, and while most often defined for elementary or middle-school age children, this objective is beginning to have importance for high school students as well (Bartgis, 2007).

Objective 6 addresses the issue of high school completion rates and is designed to reduce the number of students who fail to complete high school; however, it is not designed to ensure the completion of college preparation courses or actual programs designed to ensure that students are prepared to enter the workforce. Finally, the seventh objective was conceived as a transformation of education where theory is placed into action based on identifiable evidence rather than assumptions or theories, specifically making education an "evidence-based field" (Bartgis, 2007, p. 1). In addition, objective seven includes a greater call on educators to rely on strategic developments for educational goals, based on study results and best practices rather than on simple theory or tradition (Boeree, 2006).

Many of the concerns about Upward Bound and similar programs have focused on their ability to provide a solution for the educational gaps between high-performing school districts and districts whose students are failing to meet state requirements. The first strategic goal presents the opportunity to evaluate the success rate of educators. Poor instructors negatively impact students' ability to make academic gains in school. Although there has been limited evidence that teacher performance is school district based, it may be reasonable to assume that this factor may impact the success of students. Additionally, due to the fact that many education decisions have not been developed from evidence or research, the objective examines the need to make education an evidence-based field, applying research objectives and best practices to the success rates of the schools.

U.S. Department of Education Strategic Goal 2

The United States has faced substantial job losses over the last 3 years. Developing a more educated workforce will bring the higher quality jobs back to the United States and provide organizations with talent-based workforces. Traditionally, the focus has been on increasing the education of adults; however, educational needs begin even in primary and secondary education. Strategic Goal 2 was designed as a focus to increase the knowledge base of students to include higher math, science, and even foreign language success in the school districts. Success rates in primary and secondary education will provide greater success in postsecondary education. Specifically, Strategic Goal 2 focuses on the need to "increase the academic achievement of all high school students" (USDoE, 2008c, p. 10). Three objectives were developed to demonstrate the needs of this strategic goal. In the first objective, the number of students taking rigorous curriculums in high school is identified as

deficient; therefore, the objective aims to increase the amount of assistance provided to students with these types of course schedules for preparation for college-based curriculums. The second objective is designed to identify the math and science needs of students, including advanced mathematics and science courses that can assist in preparing students for college-based classes and eliminating the need for students to take lower-level courses in the first year of college. In response to the growing mobility of organizations and the increase of interaction with other countries, the third objective includes foreign languages and the goal to increase the foreign language proficiency of all students.

U.S. Department of Education Strategic Goal 3

Strategic Goal 3 was designed to meet the needs of students unable to afford the courses that can make them successful in today's changing job markets. It addresses the needs of students heading to college and older adults returning to college. These objectives provide focus for schools and assist the process of reviewing the success of the program. Strategic Goal 3 was designed to ensure individuals have the affordability and accessibility to participate in higher education if they choose to do so.

Objective 1, which is intended to "increase success in and completion of quality postsecondary education" (USDoE, 2008c, p. 14), has as its primary concern the failure of graduates from the Upward Bound Program to complete a postsecondary education. This failure was identified as a concern because the goal of the program is to encourage students to obtain a college degree; however, the program has not always guaranteed successful completion of a college education.

Theorists and some studies have determined that part of the failure to complete a postsecondary education stems from the costs of the education. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that if financial aid is readily available and easier to understand, students will be more likely to obtain their college degree. Thus Objective 2, which calls for schools to "deliver student financial aid to students and parents effectively and efficiently" (USDoE, 2008c, p. 14), was created. Finally, Objective 3, which addressed the need to "prepare adult learners and individuals with disabilities for higher education, employment, and productive lives" (USDoE, 2008c, p. 14), was designed to reach another set of academic concerns in the US, those pertaining to disadvantaged or special needs groups.

Review of Research Regarding the Upward Bound Program

During George W. Bush's term as president, he "proposed no increase in spending for Upward Bound, declaring the program 'ineffective'" (Field, 2007b, p. 1). This decision was made prior to the completion of research that examined the current success or failure of the Upward Bound Programs and was in response to a number of conditions that could not demonstrate the full impact that the college preparatory programs have on high school students.

During the 2005-2006 school years, consideration was given to completely removing Upward Bound and other programs in order to provide additional funding for NCLB, which had been expanded to include high school students. Operation Rolling Thunder was created to undo actions taken by the Bush Administration that appeared to be focused on scientifically proving that the Upward Bound Program was not effective through a study to evaluate the overall impact of the program (Field, 2007b).

According to Engle (2007), many educators view Upward Bound as a highly productive program that provides the necessary tools for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in college and in life. The relationship between what is available to Upward Bound students and what is considered shared curricula with the schools is essential to motivate students to succeed in school and continue on to college. Indeed, college degrees are often beneficial in raising the earning potential of graduates. Providing information about education and the tools necessary to complete these programs successfully is a benefit to all students in Upward Bound, who would not typically have access to extrinsic and intrinsic motivations such as noteworthy praise by teachers or an opportunity to compete in academic competitions for completing postsecondary educational goals.

Although many organizations and political objectives are focused on increasing the success rate of minorities and economically disadvantaged students, many researchers have not completely reviewed the decision-making process of participants in programs such as Upward Bound. A few studies, however, have examined some of the related aspects. For instance, Grimard and Maddaus (2004) researched low-income students in rural Upward Bound programs in the New England states. They found that the leading indicators of students who decided to remain in Upward Bound included social interest, where students enjoyed meeting other students or people that were not like themselves. (86.7%), simply enjoyed meeting other or new students (84.8%), personally felt that Upward Bound staff recognized and assisted in their personal needs (75.5%), and had a friend or fellow student in the program (73.6%).

Saliwanchik-Brown (2005) explored the risks to students in Maine Upward Bound programs based on social status and the sense of belonging in their

communities based on their economic status; their study demonstrated that low-income students and first-generation college students were more likely to drop out of school and programs than any other risk groups. Owens and Johnson (2009) reviewed motivational and trust factors associated with Upward Bound. When asked their motivation for joining the program, many of the respondents in their study explained that their parents had signed them up for Upward Bound because it "sounded pretty good" (p. 326). Other students decided to participate in the program because siblings had enjoyed the program, friends were already participating in the program, or guidance counselors had recommended the program. Trust is another consideration developed as a motivational strategy and is reflected in the ability of students to continue with the program. Owens and Johnson asserted that trust grew over time, even in situations when the students felt rebellious toward behavioral expectations. They also noted that many students felt that participating in the activities of Upward Bound and obeying the program rules assisted in their success.

Concern about the achievement gaps in math and science for K-12 economically disadvantaged students encouraged the USDoE to "establish a math and science initiative in 1990 within Upward Bound referred to as Upward Bound Math-Science (UBMS)" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. ix). These achievement gaps, which have been present since the 1970s, represent challenges because of the potential economic differences often associated with the math, science, and engineering (MSE) fields and the need to develop opportunities in all fields for all groups. The goals of the Upward Bound Program carry over to the UBMS Program. This program addresses the needs to increase student participation in math and science programs following high school graduation, as many colleges do not have high enrollment in these types of courses. The development of these courses includes creating course objectives that assist the

student in excelling in the program through achievement of goals, and "the course work is designed to provide academic enrichment instead of academic remediation" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. xi).

Underrepresentation of minority groups and disadvantaged backgrounds in MSE fields has led to further development of UBMS's focus on math and science programs, which differs from traditional Upward Bound programs because of the inclusion of hands-on experience in laboratories, computer facilities, and field sites. The UBMS Program is also designed to introduce students to scientists and mathematicians working in their fields, developing current research, or applying knowledge and discovering in their work or fields. In the course of the UBMS project, during 2004, almost 7,000 students were served through 127 projects at a cost of $32.8 million, or $5,000 per student (Olsen et al., 2007, p. ix). In terms of overall cost, the UBMS Program is perceived to be amongst the most costly of programs designed for the purpose of preparing students for a postsecondary educational environment, and the success rate is important to the continued funding of the program. Other precollege programs funded federally, such as GEARS, have similar objectives.

In terms of the demographic profile of the program, often as much as 25% are self-identified as White or Caucasian, while 60% of the program's participants are African American or Latino. In terms of meeting eligibility criteria to be admitted to the UBMS Program, a consideration is the socioeconomic circumstances; students who qualify are recognized as low income based on "taxable income of no greater than 150 percent of the poverty line" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. ix). In addition, the objective is to provide opportunities to first-generation college students, where neither parent has a four-year degree or better. The demographic profile is considered a

defining aspect of at-risk children based on the likelihood that they will not attend college without intervention methods.

UBMS is different from other Upward Bound programs because of the features it offers to students and the school system. The "high levels of annual funding per student and low student-teacher ratios" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 5) increase the ability of the teachers to work individually with the students and places greater emphasis on learning at the students' level and pace. Development of "recruiting strategies that attract students from wide geographic areas" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 5) increases the diversity of the program and compensates for school districts that are unable to offer the program. Another advantage of UBMS is the "service provision that is heavily concentrated in residential programs during the summer" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 5), which works successfully with the stakeholders who value these programs and builds a clear understanding of the success rate and goals of the program. Stakeholders for these programs include the communities, schools, students, educators, colleges, and even government agencies that must work to increase adolescent success within the communities as a way of monitoring continued academic success.

Other features that differentiate UBMS include the "course offerings that focus on math and science relative to other subjects" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 5), which addresses the growing need for more professionals in the MSE fields. The program also addresses the need for "academic preparation over nonacademic college preparatory activities, and academic enrichment over remediation" (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 5). The success of these objectives is directly applicable to the needs of the community, organizations, and even the country, and thus a study to determine how successful this program is in meeting its objectives was conducted.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR; Moore, 1997) began a national evaluation of Upward Bound in 1991; however, in 1997, changes were made to the format, and two new reports were developed. The first report used surveys and transcripts from students, with samples from the 1998-1999 and 2001-2002 school years. The second MPR report was "based on data collected between 2003 and 2005" (Moore, 1997, p. x). In developing the impact analysis, MPR measured the results of "performance in high school, especially in math and science courses; postsecondary attendance, persistence and completion; and the likelihood of completing a postsecondary degree in mathematics or a scientific field" (Moore, 1997, p. x). A sample of students was selected, from which MPR was able to successfully analyze the different research questions developed and focus successfully on the primary objectives. Olsen et al. (2007) commented that the impact analysis was effective because it included the sample of students based on the perceived relationships these students have with student populations that have not participated in a UBMS Program.

In addition, MPR included only students who had enrolled during the mid-1990s, when the program was still new, and included a survey sample that consisted of all 81 projects operating at that time. Of the 81, 74 responded to the survey. Olsen et al. (2007) compared MPR's research to case studies and annual performance reports. The findings included a number of positive results as well as best practices that may be identified for later research. The indication was that the UBMS did provide a great amount of academic assistance, which was examined to determine how much effort and learning was gathered from the program. Olsen et al. reported, "In the summer, the average UBMS project provided a total of 240 hours of academic instruction, and participation in the program is roughly full-time for a six-week

period" (p. xi). The 6-week program typically involved a number of field trips, hands-on projects, and study opportunities. The summer programs also gave students something to do and continued the positive reinforcement for the program.

Moore (1997) also found that the members of the program "are most active during the summers" (p. xi). Summer months provide a great deal of opportunity to reach out to students and keep them involved. According to Olsen et al. (2007), "UBMS projects typically provide services, such as tutoring or study sessions, during the school year, but they provide most of their services during summer residential programs at the colleges or universities hosting the program" (p. xi). UBMS has been most successful during the summer months because of the availability of time.

From the impact analysis, MPR found that UBMS "improved high school grades in math and science and overall" (as cited in Olsen et al., 2007, p. xi). UBMS assisted in raising the grade point averages (GPAs) of the participants in math courses from 2.7 to 2.8 and the average GPA in science courses from 2.7 to 2.9. Another positive aspect of UBMS was that it increased the likelihood that participants would take upper-level science courses in high school. UBMS also raised the percentage of students taking chemistry from 78 percent to 88 percent and those taking physics from 43 percent to 58 percent. However, the UBMS Program did not appear to influence advanced math enrollment.

The UBMS was documented as being successful, based on increasing the percentage of students from 71 percent to 82 percent (Olsen et al., 2007). Another aspect of the UBMS that was studied included the choice of major for students participating in the program. The number of students selecting a related major or planning to major in math or science programs increased from 23 percent to 33 percent, thereby decreasing the percentage of students majoring in a field outside of

math or science and the social sciences from 51 to 42 percent (Olsen et al., 2007). The measurement of UBMS considered the completion of degree programs, validating the increases to entrance into college by students who otherwise would not have the option of attending postsecondary school. The results demonstrated that there was an increase in the percentage of students earning a degree in the fields of math, social sciences, and sciences by 6%; however, a decrease occurred in the percentage of students obtaining degrees in other fields by 6%. While the UBMS Program did appear to be a great success in achieving goals of increasing student awareness of needed fields, it appeared to only succeed in creating a more equal disbursement of students into the fields, rather than increase the number of students obtaining degrees. Overall, the UBMS study demonstrated that this program has been successful, perhaps even more so than Upward Bound (Curtin & Cahalan, 2004).

GEAR UP was created in the 1990s to be a college outreach program similar to Upward Bound. GEAR UP has been under scrutiny regarding its success rate. Cabrera et al. (2006) gathered data that did not demonstrate significant positive statistical results for the program. Specifically, Cabrera et al. stated that socioeconomic status (SES) is a direct influencing factor on movement through high school and on to higher education, even trade schools. The means to achieve a high school education can be outside the ability of SES disadvantaged students due to the needs of the home, such as the need to work evenings to assist in the support of the family.

Recognized as a comprehensive intervention program (CIP), GEAR UP was designed to increase the likelihood that at-risk students would attend college. According to Cabrera et al. (2006), "The program funds partnerships of high-poverty middle schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and businesses to

work with entire grade levels of students, beginning not later than the sixth grade and staying with these students through high school" (p. 82). Because very few researchers have focused on the social and cultural aspects or needs of these types of programs, Cabrera et al. decided to evaluate these particular needs. The study was designed using a sample of 107 middle schools in 1999 and 112 middle schools in 2001 who participated in GEAR UP.

In order to develop a fair or random sampling of students, Cabrera et al. (2006) used the three-stage process. They began with a list of 100 similar schools and then reduced that number to the five schools that were similar in academic performance index (API) scores. A coding system was designed to evaluate the schools, and the results were tabulated. Cabrera et al. developed the study to use a multilevel design that repeated measures and procedures in order to reduce the risk of inaccurate information and to provide an accurate accounting of results.

The overall findings of the study did not demonstrate positive success of the program. The performance rates were not as high as expected in reading or math; however, Cabrera et al. (2006) recognized that the success of the program may have been related to grades above the sixth- to eighth-grade target market investigated. Cabrera et al. reported, "The results suggest that, in reading, the CIP activities and services appear to have had some effect, but the gains are modest and not statistically significant, at least over the 2 years studied here" (p. 94). They also stated, "It is noteworthy, however, that the trend is in the hypothesized direction, and the lag in reading performance, favoring non-CIP versus CIP schools, disappeared once the schools' participation in CIP programs began" (p. 94). In contrast, Cabrera et al. found that "in math, however, CIP students appear to have gained at a higher rate in both Grades 7 and 8 than did their peers not exposed to CIP interventions" (p. 94).

Finally, Domina (2009) examined the success of a number of college outreach programs, including Upward Bound, UBMS, GEAR UP, and several others, and reported that as of 2002, approximately "5% of all U.S. public high school students participate in a college outreach program for disadvantaged students" and that "ELS data reveal that nearly 10% of all poor 10th graders participate in college outreach programs" (p. 127). She concluded that the results from 1989 for all of these programs had a positive effect on high school graduation, in that program participants had a 21% higher graduation rate than the control group, and that the results demonstrated a positive effect on college enrollment, as students in treatment groups were 26% more likely to enroll in college than the control groups. However, in 1995, the same programs had different results, perhaps because of the limited experience of students who participated in these types of programs. Domina stated that the 1995 results were different from the previous years' results and included "no effect on high school graduation, no effect on 4-year college enrollment and a positive effect on any college enrollment," with students in the treatment group being only 4% more likely to enroll in any college than the control group (p. 130). The programs also had "no effect on student GPA, no effect on high school course selection, no effect on high school graduation, no effect on college plans, and no effect on high school curriculum" (p. 131).

According to Domina (2009), the positive effects for the Upward Bound Program in particular included results that were defined as the treatment groups' increased participation in applying to higher education institutions and a 6-18% increase in enrollment in the in-state colleges over the control group. The control group was based on similarities of students outside the criteria for acceptance into the Upward Bound Program, but still eligible and interested in attending a four-year

degree program. In addition, treatment group students in two states, Florida and Texas, had a higher enrollment rate following completion of high school than students in the control group who were expected to have similar achievement goals and potential.

Domina's (2009) study suggested that there were modest positive effects on students who entered the program with lower than normal educational expectations. One selection for study was the students involved in the Upward Bound Program who did not personally feel as if they would qualify or be successful at earning a four-year degree. When encouraged to take advanced courses in their high school curriculum, these students were specifically encouraged to enroll in the college courses, and their numbers of enrollment increased by approximately 5% over the control group.

Overall, Domina's (2009) study did find that the students involved in the Upward Bound Program were more likely to graduate from high school, but participation in the program did not guarantee higher grades nor did the program strictly achieve the goals of increased enrollment and specific course participation. The information provided by the study indicated that the expected outcomes of the programs are not successful, which is not the same results found in the MPR study reported by Olsen et al. (2007). However, the study conducted by MPR was most specifically for UBMS rather than the regular Upward Bound Program, and these results could demonstrate a need to reformulate the program more like its predecessor.

Review of Methodological Issues

McGee (2004) stated, "The achievement gap is the single most critical issue in American education" (p. 1). Some imbalances believed to influence or result from achievement gaps have been identified as the following: minority students enrolled in

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public education centers with economic disadvantages, decreased numbers of minority students in advanced science and mathematics courses, and reduced number of course credits or credits that will transfer (Field, 2006).

A review of the literature on achievement gaps included studies that have examined the relationship between ethnicities or economic demographics and the performance variables of students participating in Upward Bound. Particularly notable have been studies based on the implication that learning is achievable regardless of any biological or sociological components influencing students. According to Bennett et al. (2004), "The National Study Group reviewed strong evidence that academic ability is a developed (and developable) ability, one that is not simply a function of one's biological endowment or a fixed aptitude" (p. 1).

Roach (2006) contended that research identifying achievement gaps has demonstrated that African American and Latino students most often represent disproportionate ratios for the public school systems from all grades between kindergarten and graduation. In addition, Roach identified a larger numbers of Latinos and African Americans in minority or economically disadvantaged school systems, where there is a severe decrease in availability of programs and higher-level courses to assist students in achieving college-prep objectives due to lack of funding and lack of staff members to run the programs effectively.

Bennett et al. (2004) studied the relationship between ethnicity and the achievement gap, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress samples of 8th- and 12th-grade students nationally from 1996 to 2000 for science and mathematics and from 1998 to 2002 for reading. Bennett et al. concluded, "At each grade level, Black and Latino students perform significantly lower than white students in science, mathematics, and reading" (p. 3). They also reported that the NCES mean

scores for the SAT verbal and mathematical scores of minority students were lower than those of White students. These same scores were not always indicative of college entrance rates, which did see a reduction in the gap in 1998 and 1999; however, the gap for college entrance has slowly increased since this time.

Burney and Beilke (2008) suggested that a major influence on the achievement gap of minority students may be directly related to poverty. They revealed that the percentages of poverty-level children included 29% Latinos, 33% African Americans, 10% Asians, and 15% Whites. Additionally, these percentages accounted for a total of 17% of all individuals under the age of 18 living within the U.S. during this time (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Although a larger percentage of minority groups have been defined as living at the poverty level, Burney and Beilke (2008) noted that since the 1990 census, the population living in poverty has diversified and may continue to do so.

Burney and Beilke (2008) did not believe that the well-defined historical relevance of race and poverty fully explained the poverty problem. However, many poverty studies have linked poverty to decreased grades and a pattern of poverty in families. For example, Payne (1995) defined generational poverty as family units that are at the poverty level for more than two generations. Payne developed the theory that poverty creates a definable cultural difference in students that can and does influence the success of educational growth. Payne also described fundamental cultural characteristics of the poverty class as a home environment consisting of constant "background noise, an emphasis on entertainment, casual language, survival orientation, a belief in fate, present time focus, disorganization and disorder, and live in the moment" (p. 108).

McGee (2004) examined the "difference in academic performance between low-income children and their peers" (p. 1). Academic achievement gaps are typically more profound in areas where the income levels are lower. McGee evaluated these perceived differences "between minority children and their classmates and between those schools that serve a majority of children from low-income families and those that serve a more advantaged population" (p. 1). In addition to evaluating the achievement gap, McGee suggested that high schools cannot possibly meet higher educational demands if the lower grades are not able to meet their achievement objectives. Few studies have been able to demonstrate how the system has failed and what the system can do to support the needs of students.

According to McGee (2004), "Though the achievement gap is measured by test scores, it is not about just test scores" (p. 106). McGee did not agree that researchers have found that higher education increases the different "abstract attributes" (p. 106). According to McGee, low-income or disadvantaged schools do perform and do demonstrate achievement growth every single year. By recreating this example, it may be possible for schools to develop this same kind of success; however, support programs available to increase the success rate of students may limit school systems.

Retaining minority students in high school and Upward Bound becomes particularly important when comparing ethnic groups and studies reviewing graduation and dropout rates. The social ramifications of poverty include the inability of students to focus on schoolwork. Attendance also may be a problem for the successful completion of programs such as Upward Bound. According to *Teachers See Firsthand the Effects of Poverty on Children* (2008), "Children from low-income families have more on their minds than homework, quizzes and extra-curricular

activities. Some have spent the night in cars, at campgrounds or with relatives and friends" (p. 1). Although not all minority students are from families living in poverty, it is true that it is a consideration for entrance into Upward Bound, as there seems to be a link: "West Salem School District Superintendent Nancy Burns said student achievement and free and reduced-cost lunch typically have a direct link…. The greater number of students receiving free and reduced (cost) lunch, the lower student achievement" (*Teachers See*, 2008, p. 1).

According to Bennett et al. (2004), the National Task Force on Minority High Achievement "concluded that these problems require a national effort at the affirmative development of academic ability" (p. 7). The task force developed three primary objectives in overcoming the achievement gaps: "high-quality teaching and instruction in the classroom, trusting relationships in school, and environmental supports for pro-academic behavior in the school and community" (p. 7).

McGee (2004) revealed that the North Central Regional Education Laboratory, which conducted studies in Wisconsin, identified five characteristics that schools should develop in order to improve retention and close the achievement gap. First is "leadership, defined as purposeful and proactive administrative leadership, sense of community, data-based decision making and program monitoring, student-centered programs and services designed around individual needs, and high expectations for all students" (p. 107). Second, school districts must offer professional development, which includes "staff-initiated professional development, opportunities for staff interaction, and peer coaching and mentoring" (p. 107). The third recognized characteristic is curriculum and instruction, defined by McGee as "emphasis on project-based instruction (teacher-directed was the norm), curriculum aligned with state standards, and use of local and state assessment data" (p. 107). Another

contributing factor to school success is parent/community involvement and includes "multiple means of contacting and working with parents and school as community center" (p. 107). Finally, the fifth characteristic is structure/organization, which involves "small class sizes and alternative support programs" (p. 107).

This section summarized studies that have specifically suggested strategies to address the achievement gap and retention challenge. These studies have focused on motivation, retention, and the changing needs of adolescents and young adults. Upward Bound strives to understand how students perceive life and how the educational process can be interrupted through life-altering events.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Studies have evaluated achievement gaps that have focused primarily on the success or failure of current programs and curricula to meet student needs in all environments. Many studies do not evaluate for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student needs in curriculum or testing criteria, which is believed to have an impact on the success of the curriculum and the testing scores of minority students (Brown, 2007). Hmong students share particular cultural experiences that impact their success in high school as culturally and linguistically diverse students. CLD students have become a more contemporary concern because of the increasing diversity of the U.S. population (Singley & Sedlacek, 2009).

Bennett et al. (2004) proposed that academic achievement gaps "between groups of students from different social divisions (class, ethnicity, gender, and language)" could be overcome by "the development of intellective competence in a wide range of individuals through interventions in our homes, communities, and schools" (p. 1). This assertion was not unlike those of other educational leaders in

focusing on the importance of developing programs that are specifically designed to meet the different needs of students based on CLD needs rather than academic needs. As a way to reach children whose academic achievements are consistently lower, educators have proposed changes to the ways in which Upward Bound reaches children and the implementation of best practices related specifically to CLD student needs.

Brown (2007) gathered information from a number of sources and described CLD student needs to include offering explicit and strategic instruction, developing higher standards for students in all grades and with all needs; allowing students to develop self-assessments, providing positive feedback and evaluations for teachers (to include self-evaluation), and increasing the amount of motivation for students to be involved with the learning and teaching process. Brown's influences included a number of researchers from the mid-1990s through the early 2000s, in what is now considered expert knowledge in the goals to develop the field into an evidence-based field. Brown published expectations of CLD needs similar to those of achievement gap needs.

Harry, Arnaiz, Klingner, and Sturges (2008) stated, "To say that the rejection of students' cultures contributes to low achievement is not to say that culture and society determine students' reactions to inequity" (p. 21). They also cited other researchers, noting that "Fordham (1988) argued that successful high school students found it necessary to 'act White' to be successful, whereas O'Connor (1997), in contrast, found that such students were able to incorporate African American cultural features into their performance of success" (p. 23). Jefferson-Maimer (2003) further evaluated culture and social capital, finding that culture did play a role in Upward Bound student success in continuing on to college. This research clearly indicated that

cultural differences occur within U.S. cities, as well as among Latino or immigrant populations, and is an active factor in college-bound program success (Harry et al., 2008; Jefferson-Maimer, 2003).

Cartledge and Kourea (2008) asserted that the best practices of educators must include the components necessary to provide CLD students with interventions for increasing success in all learning measures, specifically by addressing readiness. Many education difficulties can be in the failure of early intervention to establish clear objectives for students through learning objectives that are measurable and obtainable. Additionally, the need for increased feedback for students can promote success when students are unable to understand where they have failed in assignments, or where additional work is needed. Most specifically, Cartledge and Kourea (2008) felt there to be a compelling need to increase the early interventions that "address readiness limitations" and provide students with "complete, clear, and measurable learning objectives" (p. 355).

Recommendations from Cartledge and Kourea (2008) also included guidance from teachers to increase students' expectations. The correct use of curriculum and instruction may help to address CLD needs and reduce the achievement gap between CLD students and other students in the district or school system. Brown (2007) suggested that by understanding the values, traditions, and learning styles of ethnic groups, educators are able to use strategies that enhance the multicultural content of a school's curriculum.

Brown (2007) also stated that best practices to meet CLD students' needs include the use of "cultural scaffolding—that is, students' cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement" (p. 58). However, teachers may find it difficult to meet the growing needs of students because of the

one-size-fits-all way of addressing challenges in the classroom. According to Harley, Lawrence, Acord, and Dixson (2009), teachers have unique challenges because they have large amounts of information to process and determine what is acceptable for ensuring student success.

Many studies of CLD students have found that communities with larger numbers of families living in poverty have many more CLD student needs than areas with less disadvantaged populations. The primary objective of Upward Bound is to provide disadvantaged students or at-risk students with opportunities that will increase their likelihood of success through high school and lead to college. Schon, Shaftel, and Markham (2008) remarked that quite often, the problems related to achievement gaps are directly related to misdiagnosis of students in any combination of ELL, SLL (second language learner), ESL (English as a second language), CLD, LEP, and special education needs. The inability to place students clearly within the correct programs can lead to decreased academic performance. Developing methods to recognize these needs may increase the success rate of programs such as Upward Bound that are designed to close the achievement gap.

Harry (2008) reported that family interactions with schools were particularly lower for CLD students because of the more difficult needs of this group's parents and caregivers. To further understand the needs of CLD students, families, and caregivers, Harry reviewed research to "identify the key requirements for collaborative relationships between professionals and CLD families, to examine the nature of actual collaboration with CLD families of children with disabilities, and to provide recommendations regarding improving such collaboration" (p. 371). According to Epstein, the six roles of home-school interactions include "parenting that supports children's participation in schooling, parental communication with the

school as needed, volunteering at the school, supervising and/or assisting in homework, participating in school-based decision-making committees, and serving as liaison between school and community" (as cited in Harry, 2008, p. 373). Parental interaction can directly influence the success rate of students in all school districts regardless of financial success (Vogel, 2008).

CLD families often have parents or caregivers who speak a language other than English, may have different goals culturally, and may have different work schedules. Harry (2008) noted that not all CLD students' parents feel comfortable with their children attending local neighborhood schools. A primary focus of the many different programs includes the objective of involving families and gaining support from parental units. Most schools have demonstrated success when parental involvement is consistent and responsive to the needs of both school and children (Thompson, 1998).

Cartledge, Singh, and Gibson (2008) stated, "The goal is not simply to reduce the numbers of CLD youths placed in special education, but more important, to ensure the existence of school programs that result in academic and social competence for these students" (p. 30). The goal is to find ways to reach all the students, regardless of their learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic status. Similarly, the purpose of NCLB is to reduce racial achievement disparities and disproportionality through educational accountability. The main tool of that accountability is statewide testing of minority students, students with disabilities, low-income students, and ELLs. Districts are expected to disaggregate their data so that the performance of these subgroups is public and monitored, with the goal of demonstrating adequate yearly progress (AYP). Districts also are expected to disaggregate and make public disciplinary data according to subgroups.

Teachers of CLD students with disabilities often are characterized as having low expectations and negative attitudes toward these students. They expect the students to present problem behaviors, and a lack of progress is typically attributed to the students. There is legitimate concern regarding the perceptions and skills of teachers of CLD students (Cartledge et al., 2008).

<p style="text-align:center">Critique of Previous Research</p>

Interdisciplinary Studies and Strategies

Greene and Winters (2006) evaluated the influence of school size on graduation rates of students. They reported the graduation rates of designated high schools and examined relationships, determined by a fixed-effects model, for the years 1991 and 2002, which calculated the graduating classes for school districts in each individual state. Greene and Winters recognized that changing the size of the school can influence the graduation rate. Larger schools have a tendency to lose students who are having difficulty because they do not have access to individual instruction and assistance; in addition, smaller classrooms and student numbers can increase the success of the school system. The successes of the school system has not always been true of Title I schools. According to Orfield, Losen, Wald, and Swanson (2004):

> An independent estimate by Greene and Winters (2006) indicated that only 71% of the class of 2002 graduated high school with a regular diploma and that only slightly more than one half of all Latino and African American students who enter the ninth grade graduate from high school. (p. 17)

Graduation rates are not the only considerations for educational gaps. A number of studies have reviewed the success rates of NCLB (Anderson, Medrich, & Fowler, 2007). According to Gallimore and Santagata (2006):

> The goal of a strong research base for education is now the law of the land. It was incorporated into a major legislative initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. NCLB includes 111 references to "scientifically based research" (Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002; National Research Council, 2002).

Gallimore and Santagata (2006) recommended developing research and development priorities in education that will enable the field to meet the newest government goals of achieving an evidence-based system that can provide reasons for the movement between theories or the implementation of change. The primary worry or consideration is lack of funding, though it is perceived that these needs will be met by the increased objectives of the federal government to obtain leadership in education worldwide. However, achieving the goals of evidence-based education may be difficult due to the amount of funding that will be required to reach these goals.

Changing teaching objectives also means overcoming the barriers to change by administrators and educators (Gallimore & Santagata, 2006; McCombs, 1998; Thornton, Peltier, & Perreault, 2004). Gallimore and Santagata (2006) stated the greatest barriers to change in education are the result of difficulties in communication, different treatments, disorganization, and lack of proper training and support staff. They demonstrated a research and development model applicable to multiple purposes and different communities, which is related to the needs of understanding programs such as Upward Bound.

NCLB has received a great deal of criticism, and whether the act has been successful is debatable (Cleary & Raimon, 2009; Scott, 2009). The goal of NCLB was originally focused on elementary and middle schools, but it has also been applied to high schools and does contribute to research and educational needs. LeVine (2009) reported that needing to close the achievement gap has gained recognition on Capital Hill, resulting in consideration of a strict set of standards that will address all the states rather than individual state assessments that may not be compatible between states. Levin also indicated that Education Secretary Arne Duncan proposed that the project of standardization be supplemented with government funding of at least $5 billion, which would be divided between all states that were interested in raising their standards prior to the federal requirements being developed and considered. The volunteer process for improved standards is referred to as the Race to the Top program.

According to LeVine (2009), the Race to the Top program is a way to increase shared success stories among states, thus increasing the needed collaboration between school systems; however, "Duncan wants to nudge the winning states toward agreeing on rigorous, shared curricula that could spread across the country" (p. 1). The idea comes under fire due to the complications of state demographic profiles, differences in school cultural needs, and even differences in testing. Duncan indicated that 50 states creating their own independent version of rigorous standards is not the best way of implementing an educational change. Race to the Top is a way "to say to a set of states, 'You lead the national conversation. You do this'" (LeVine, 2009, p. 1).

Researchers have reviewed the success rates of Upward Bound in reducing the achievement gap and increasing the retention rates of minority students; however, related studies often have evaluated the values that are directly related to program

success rates. Lake Snell Perry & Associates (2003) conducted a survey of Americans to evaluate where opinions of educational values were in relation to postsecondary education. Results of the survey revealed that a small amount, 15%, of the respondents "believe our high schools work pretty well now," and 36% of respondents indicated that "some changes are needed but high schools should remain basically the same" (p. 3). In addition, 45% of respondents answered that "at the very least, major changes are needed," 28% of respondents agreed that major changes are needed for the schools, and 17% want "a complete overhaul" (p. 3; see Figure 1).

Lake Snell Perry & Associates (2003) also asked the respondents whether they were aware of the number of students who drop out of high school, go to college, and complete college degrees. Estimations of the number of students who graduate were less than 50%. Actually, at the time of this report, 2003, the rate of high school graduates continuing on to college was approximately 75%. Additionally, the survey uncovered other negative evaluations that revealed a lack of knowledge, such as only 15% being aware of the matriculation levels, 81% believing that fewer than the number presented began college after high school graduation, and many who did not think that more than 1/3 of high school students continued on to college.

The survey also asked respondents what factors they believe contribute to students not completing college. Of the responses, 84% felt "the cost of a college education being too expensive for many students and families" was a primary concern "facing our nation's education system today" (Lake Snell Perry & Associates, 2003, p. 5). Concerns were not limited to cost, but cost was indicated at a higher percentage because most respondents felt that a large number of potential students would not be able to meet the financial requirements of school. In addition, most of the responses demonstrated a belief that education is not proportional between lower and higher

socioeconomic situations due to imbalances in ability to afford education. In fact, "[A]lmost two thirds (64%) say lower income students not having equal access to a college education is a major problem" (Lake Snell Perry & Associates, 2003, p. 5). Finally, results of the study showed that race, annual income, and even political party influenced the responses gathered. For instance, "Democrats (74%) are more likely to consider this a major problem than Independents (58%) or Republicans (55%)" (Lake Snell Perry & Associates, 2003, p. 5).

In addition to looking at the overall viewpoints of college, some research has examined the relationships with family roles in education. Tierney (2002) acknowledged that the family's role has changed over the past century and that the relationships developed between school and family hold new meanings that are no longer defined by traditional school definitions. The role of family has changed, and the meaning of family has changed as well. For instance, divorced and single-parent family units are common, grandparents are raising grandchildren, and extended families are more common. The family unit is no longer defined by parents and children, and in this way, Tierney recognized that requirements on mothers and fathers can be counterproductive, especially if they are not the individuals raising the children. Tierney noted that there needs to be standardization that includes establishing the policies and procedures that could increase the success of low-income or disadvantaged students otherwise identified as "urban youth" (p. 591).

Much research over the past decades has demonstrated that parental involvement can increase student success. According to Colyar (as cited in Tierney, 2002), most research demonstrates that students in higher education are most often from homes that are both supportive and demanding. It is recognized by researchers that children with involved parents often have greater success at many grade levels,

including higher education (Brown, 2007). Finally, Tierney (2002) stated that the identity and culture of a student are important aspects that must be cultivated in the classroom and school in order to allow students to recognize their importance as an individual and as a member of their family.

Summary

Limited studies have not fully examined the progress of the Upward Bound Program in relation to the perceptions of Hmong students. Organizations and researchers have reviewed a number of programs to define how well college outreach programs work. Clear relationships exist among minority retention, college outreach programs, and current research developed to examine CLD students' needs (Denner, Cooper, Dunbar, & Lopez, 2005). Educators believe that diversity is a key factor in improving school systems with lower retention rates, lower scores in standardized testing, and lower success rates with outreach programs such as Upward Bound. A deeper examination of the perceptions of Hmong students enrolled in these programs, and how those perceptions influence the participation of Hmong students in these programs, may help educators make program improvements that increase overall program impacts.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to determine the perceptions of Hmong students concerning the Upward Bound Program as well as determine how the perceptions relate to their involvement in the program. This chapter describes the research methodology that was used to assess and evaluate the identified problem and provides a clear sequence of measures that were addressed during the study. In addition, the type of research used is revealed, the validity and reliability of interviews are explained, and the data collection procedures are described. An analysis of specific measures is explained within the qualitative design of the study. Finally, the chapter examines ethical considerations for the study.

Statement of the Problem

It is not known how Hmong students' perceptions of the Upward Bound Program affect their participation in the program. There has been a gap in the research regarding how Hmong students view the Upward Bound Program. Since there is very limited research regarding how Hmong students view the Upward Bound Program, it is important to conduct research that allows for a better understanding of their opinions.

Upward Bound Program directors find themselves having to make adjustments for students' academic decisions. In terms of challenges relating to the achievement gap, directors need to be aware of all factors that may impact the decision-making process of students, including economic issues, social challenges, or emotional needs. Given the complexity of academic challenges in high schools across the United

States, important questions surface in regards to perceptions of the Upward Bound Program.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions designed from a critical ethnography standpoint that sought to identify the perceptions of Hmong students who were enrolled in the Upward Bound Program at one location in central Wisconsin at the time of this study. The research questions for the study were:

R_1: What is the dominant narrative for Hmong students who participate in the Upward Bound Program? How are challenges of marginalization embedded in the narrative?

R_2: How does the Upward Bound Program currently provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization?

R_3: Based on the narratives of Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization?

The research contributes to the body of knowledge that supports administrators in making decisions about the programs that will be available to students. Understanding the student opinions of the Upward Bound Program can assist educators in designing effective programs.

Description of Research Methodology

In consideration of the application of critical ethnography research, it is obvious that a number of merits were attributed to the methodology. There was a combination of etic and emic data collected. Etic data are data in which an interpretation of information by the researcher is completed. Emic data pertains to information that is provided by the study participants that deal with first-order

concepts. First-order concepts deal with ways of expression and cultural sharing (Schwandt, 2001). Characteristics of qualitative research include a holistic focus, which involves looking for a complete picture from a social viewpoint, and discovery orientation, as demonstrated by the need to use research questions to establish base parameters. Other characteristics include understanding the personal needs of respondents through subjective data, which are "perceptions of the people in the environment," as are applicable to the information gathered due to the requirement for participants to answer from an opinion base (Key, 1997, p. 2). Personal viewpoints are most typically gathered as data in surveys, while quantitative data are gathered from statistical information, including census and inventories (Key, 1997).

The focus of developing a qualitative study is to demonstrate the recognized issues, social ramifications, and needs for further investigation of the topic, including but not limited to the focus of achieving the topic's objectives or overcoming social dilemmas that may be related to the research needs. In asking the question "What is there to know about people anyway?" researchers are often faced with everyday speculations, indicating that there are two different aspects relating to qualitative study: (a) the outward, observable side of individuals, which is what they do and what they say, or the physical and verbal behavior; and (b) the inward, unobservable side, which is their thoughts, emotions, and sensations, or their private world of experience (Patton, 2002).

It is important to understand the focus of qualitative research for this study. Quantitative research would not have sufficiently encapsulated the intricacy of the problem that was to be investigated. Much information may have been overlooked if a quantitative choice were made. There would not have been an opportunity to understand the individuality and unpredictability of the persons in this study. In using

qualitative methods, a researcher is able to measure an issue with a selected group through discussion and awareness, thereby grasping new ideas in relationship to the designated topic (Creswell, 2007). Many educators believe that influences outside of school, specifically involving relationships or social interaction, can determine the ability of a student to stay focused in the classroom. In this respect, it is reasonable to believe that influences inside and outside of the Upward Bound Program directly related to the social needs and activities of the student can positively or negatively influence the success of students in the program. Other possible influencing factors may come from diversity needs, economic needs, or family or school relationship needs, so this study analyzed the factors and social needs both in and outside of the program. The amount of time that students spend in Upward Bound can also greatly influence their success. Hmong students may have a variety of factors that influence their availability to complete the program; however, time spent in the program is a factor that directly relates to the success of the students in the program. Students' failure to spend time in the program due to their inability to be away from home or their discomfort with other members of the program may inadvertently reduce their chances of success in the program. Understanding contributing factors to time spent in the program can assist in evaluating the needs of the program and the participants. Therefore, this study examined the perceptions of Hmong students in the Upward Bound Program. The semi-structured interview and focus group questions were open-ended, guided by the belief that open-ended questions would provide greater clarity in understanding the lived experience of the students in the program.

Research Design

This study employed a critical ethnography research design in order to answer the aforementioned research questions. A triangulation strategy was used. The employment of more than one method in enhancing the validity of the construct is now popularly promoted by a large proportion of methodologists. Creswell (2008) suggested that the use of field notes and interviews or other methods enhances the accuracy of a proposed study. By drawing upon different data sources, the inquirer will find the evidence to support a particular theme or themes. This research involved collecting data such as responses to individual interviews and focus groups of Hmong participants in the Upward Bound Program and participant observations. For ease of triangulation of the research results, different perceptions were sought. For instance, information on the lived experience was obtained through interviewing students and the director of the Upward Bound Program.

Using critical ethnography as the basis for the research, the researcher gathered data through which shared patterns could be studied. Creswell (2008, p. 478) specified some specific characteristics of critical ethnography as follows:

- Critical researchers are usually politically minded people.

- Critical ethnographers challenge the status quo and ask why it is so.

- Critical ethnographers speak to an audience on behalf of their participants as a means of empowering participants by giving them more authority.

- Critical researchers seek to connect the meaning of a situation broader structure of social power can control.

- Critical ethnographers seek to change society.

- Critical ethnographers identify and celebrate their biases in research. They recognize that all research is value laden.

- Critical researchers seek to create a literal dialogue with the participants they are studying.

Critical ethnographers typically collect data through fieldwork. The researcher typically collects the data in a setting where the information can be derived from spending considerable time with the participants. For this research, the fieldwork conducted consisted of observations by the researcher, a focus group session, semi-structured interviews with the Hmong participants, and an interview with the program director. Protocols for this fieldwork are included in Appendix E through Appendix H.

Role of the Researcher

Critical ethnography arises with an ethical charge to address the notion of unfairness or injustice within a certain live domain. The circumstances for existence with a particular framework are not as they could be for the Hmong students; as a result, the researcher felt a moral responsibility to make a provision toward changing these conditions concerning greater freedom and equity. As Noblit (2004) posited, the critical ethnographer battles domestication and shifts from what is to what could be. The researcher used skills and resources to infiltrate the defenses and break through the boundaries of the participants in order to ascertain the experiences and voices of the Hmong students whose stories are otherwise discreet and out of reach. By using the positionality of voices, the Hmong students themselves were the focus, as their voices carry indigenous practices and connotations that are in opposition to the central discourses and practices. Noblit (2004) indicated that much of critical ethnography has been challenged because some of the focus of critical ethnomethodology has been on social change. Efforts were made to explain how the researcher's act of studying

and representing people and situations would be evident in positionality to acknowledge power, privilege, and bias. At the time of this study, the researcher had 8 years' experience working with the Hmong community in terms of teaching students at the collegiate level and had worked with the Hmong Community Center supporting the educational activities of Hmong community members new to the La Crosse, Wisconsin area. The researcher had also worked with members of the La Crosse community to develop new connections between Hmong students and public school systems.

Field notes were used to document field trips, cultural events, classroom instruction, and transition programs in which high school seniors took college-level classes at a host university. Site visits took place four times per week for not less than two hours contingent upon the schedule of the Upward Bound Program. Field notes were developed during each site visit.

The details of the onsite data collection included the following:

- Total Hmong students: seven (five girls; two boys).

- One Upward Bound Program director.

- Duration of collection of data: 4 months.

- Total visits: 60.

- Duration of each visit: 2 hours minimum.

- Frequency of visits: four times per week.

- Number of field notes: 60.

- Number of semi-structured interviews: 15.

- Number of focus groups: one.

Target Population, Sampling Method, and Related Procedures

Target Population

The population included Hmong students who participated in one Upward Bound Program and the director of the Upward Bound Program at a university in Wisconsin. At the time of this study, the university's Upward Bound Program served eight school districts in its area of operation in the central region of Wisconsin. The student population of the university was 9,994, with an 87% retention rate and 66% graduation rate (Campus Corner, n.d.). The retention rate pertains to the rate at which students persist in their educational program at their college or university. The graduation rate pertains to the number of students who complete a course of study.

The student population was predominately identified as White (88%) and female (55%; College Portraits, n.d.). The sample of students was perceived to represent a larger minority and low-income population in the group than the general population of the institution selected, and as part of the Upward Bound Program, may have contributed to a group of students who were better prepared for the challenges of a postsecondary environment; however, the sample was not be related to any financial data, such as loans or grants, and was not grade related.

Sampling Method

Participants in this study were recruited using purposive sampling. Concerning this type of sampling, the sample was hand-picked for the study. The researcher already understood specific information about the group of people and deliberately recruited them (Berg, 2007). This type of sampling was appropriate for the study since the target population was minority students in an Upward Bound Program.

Sample Size

Initially, the work aimed to recruit 10 Hmong students (five female and five male students) who were enrolled in the Upward Bound Program; however, males were less inclined to participate, so the number of participants was seven (five female and two male). The researcher also recruited the director of the Upward Bound Program.

Setting

The Hmong students that were recruited attended the Upward Bound Program at a university in central Wisconsin at the time of this study. The observation settings were in a variety of locations, from the Upward Bound Program site to the students' high school to the Hmong Community Center.

Recruitment

In order to attain the number of desired participants in the study, the researcher placed Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved flyers in different areas of the university for recruiting Hmong students. Contact information was provided on the flyers and posters that were located around the campus. An IRB-approved recruitment letter was mailed to the students and parents who responded seeking further information concerning participating in the study. A letter was also mailed to the students in the Upward Bound Program inviting them to participate in the study. Steps were taken to ensure protection of all individuals in terms of access to identifying information. Students were asked to contact the researcher by telephone or by email. If the researcher was contacted by telephone, information was provided as to steps necessary for consent and participation in the focus group and interviews.

Instrumentation

This study was predicated on listening to the viewpoint of the participants. First, a list of semi-structured interview questions and focus group questions was used to obtain data. The interview questions were preceded by demographic information to include gender, age, and ethnicity. To ensure the validity of the information received, the interviews were digitally recorded. The interview questions were guided by the previous research work conducted by Mireles (2009). The semi-structured interviews and focus group session were recorded and transcribed for later coding and analysis.

The researcher also conducted a pilot test to ascertain whether the participants would be able to understand and interpret the questions (Appendix E). The pilot test established reliability.

Data Collection

After receiving permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board, the researcher began the recruitment process with the goal of obtaining permission to observe, interview, and conduct a focus group of 10 Hmong students. Campus flyers were posted at various locations on the university indicating general information about recruiting participants for the study. A letter was sent from a mailing list and included an invitation to participate in the study, a summary of the study, and a contact information card. After receiving a contact card indicating the participant's desire to take part in the study, the researcher provided the necessary permission and release of information forms. All documentation was kept strictly confidential and was kept in sealed envelopes when not being used for coding or

entering of data. The researcher had strict control over the information and used a

third party, unrelated, to review the information for error or bias.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of five Hmong students in the Upward Bound Program was

conducted to check the language, vocabulary, and participant level of understanding

of the semi-structured interview and focus group questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, the acquired data from the qualitative approach was analyzed

using the collated data; the vital points were tagged with a progression of codes,

which were derived from the text. These codes were categorized into parallel concepts

for the purpose of increased workability. The constant comparative technique

encompassed both deductive and inductive reasoning. Data were reduced over a

period of time using unit analysis. There was an analysis of key words in responses to

determine a sequence of topics of interest. The data were coded using the qualitative

software Atlas ti and put into groups, which facilitated the comparison of data within

the groups and assisted in the comparison with the guiding literature. Specific

information was analyzed for patterns, categories, and topics. An analysis was made

about the associations and differences between the responses gathered in order to

understand how the data defined a set pattern. The data were further reviewed to

search for relationships that blended statements and events within a context into a

logical whole. All responses received were placed into the data management program

to assist in tabulating results and checking for accuracy. The data management

program gave the researcher the opportunity to assemble themes and trends by

individual or group of participants. The process provided an illustration that was representative of the quantity and frequency of the themes and trends, as well as tested budding conclusions. Finally, the results were compared to the models identified for student retention, found in Appendix B and C, in order to assess whether students were influenced by the intensity of the program, student perceptions, student postsecondary aspirations, and student academic motivation. The final results of the study were expected to be supportive of one of the models, but the possibility existed that they may be supportive of the creation of a new model for retention. It was reasonable to believe that the interests of students, or their needs, may change the model of retention as well.

In this study, the researcher gathered qualitative information and analyzed the information provided by the databases, as illustrated in Figure 2. The objective was to determine whether the data received contradicted or supported each other. By comparing the three databases, the researcher triangulated the data sources.
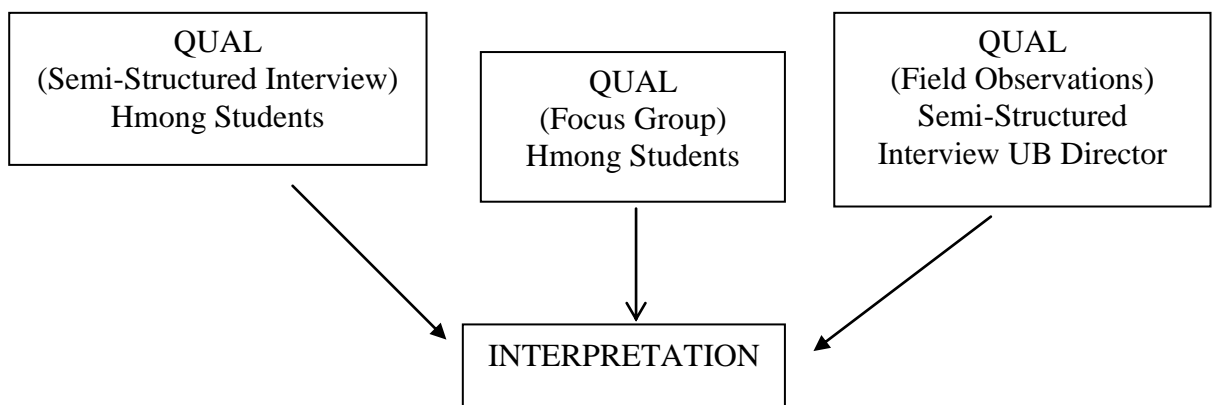

Figure 2. Triangulation of data sources.

Limitations of the Research Design

It should be noted that some hazards are associated with this approach. In considering these demerits, it can be seen that various paradigms are in conflict with each other. Nevertheless, with the comprehension of the disparity, it can be a benefit to see various viewpoints, and possible solutions may emerge. Furthermore, cultural issues have an effect on social perspectives and the ease of analysis. Knowledge of an emerging or fresh perspective is insufficient to overcome possible biases; it must be comprehended via experience and practice. On a final note, people have cognitive capacities that make them predisposed to certain perspectives. The rational thinker is more easily capable of understanding and using quantitative methods and can more easily shift from qualitative to quantitative, and not the other way round (Mingers & Brocklesby, 1997). As suggested by Creswell (2008), qualitative procedures contrast with quantitative procedures. Qualitative research focuses more on the emergent data rather than a specific set pattern of research that is preconfigured. Bryman (2007) suggested that qualitative research findings should be permitted to emerge, not be imposed by an investigator. Precise techniques are used to keep descriptions as authentic as possible to the experiential data. The investigator attempts to categorize and remove conjecture and biases and to recognize them through all phases of the research in order to diminish their influence on the findings (Creswell, 2008).

Validity

Guion (2002) indicated that validity conveys whether the results of a study are true and evident. Pertaining to validity, Creswell (2007) maintained that triangulation is an effective means to prove the consistency of any data sources contained in the same method. There are five types of triangulation, as suggested by Guion (2002):

environmental triangulation, methodological triangulation, theory triangulation, investigator triangulation, and data triangulation.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) suggested that in using triangulation of data sources, the trustworthiness of the researcher's interpretations is increased. Data triangulation is fundamentally the use of an assortment of sources of data and then categorizing the information into specific groups or types. The primary data sources for this study were the semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and focus group.

A number of strengths and limitations are associated with studies involving qualitative data. Qualitative studies may include emotional and bias responses that often are too complex for quantitative analysis. Individuals responding to the questions may respond based on unrelated events that change their perspectives or the correlation of the data may be influenced by researcher bias. The idea of validity is explained by a broad range of expressions in qualitative studies. This idea is not a single set or universal idea, but as Winter (2000) indicated, it is "rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects" (p. 1).

Some qualitative researchers have argued that the term *validity* is not pertinent to qualitative research. In fact, McGrath (1982) suggested that "all research strategies and methods are seriously flawed" (p. 61). Researchers have realized the need for some kind of measure for their research. Creswell (2008) suggested that validity is influenced by the researcher's awareness of validity in the study and his/her choice of pattern assumption. Understanding this, many researchers have utilized their own concepts of validity and have frequently created or espoused what they deem to be more suitable terms, such as value, rigor, and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002).

In investigating the meaning of rigor in research, Davies and Dodd (2002) found that the word *rigor* in research emerges in reference to the conversation about reliability and validity. Davies and Dodd disputed the claim that the concept of rigor in qualitative research must be different from what it is in quantitative research, saying that "accepting that there is a quantitative bias in the concept of rigor, we now move on to develop our preconception of rigor by exploring subjectivity, reflexivity, and the social interaction of interviewing" (p. 281).

This study was developed using a specific chain of evidence and tracked and monitored potential errors in the study or in the compilation of the data. A different set of methods was used to ensure internal and external validity of the study. The methods included triangulation of data. Merriam (1998) suggested that using this method along with member checking provides a valid way of ensuring the findings of the data. The participants in the focus group had the opportunity to review the transcripts before data analysis.

Reliability

Creswell (2007) defined reliability as a measure of consistency. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria that should be measured for ensuring trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Shenton (2004, p. 73) identified several provisions that may be made by a qualitative researcher wishing to address Lincoln and Guba's four criteria for trustworthiness, and this study did so as follows:

- Triangulation was used for this study, as using multiple methods facilitates a deep understanding of a phenomenon.

- An analytic log of activities of the research was completed.

- An external auditor was used to review the qualitatively coded data to include the results of the three research questions.

Dependability is defined as the ability to reproduce a study with continual results (Mertens, 1998). Yin (1994) suggested that when a study's protocol can be tracked through each step of the process, then the dependability of the outcome is measured to be reliable in qualitative research. In order for dependability to occur, there must also be evidence that the contact with the participants was appropriate (Mertens, 1998). Field notes and recognizable procedures were used by the researcher in the conclusion of this study to ensure dependability. In addition, to add to the dependability, the researcher kept annotated documentation of the following: (a) date when the focus group was conducted with students; (b) dates when interviews were conducted; (c) responses of all participants; and (d) conclusions of the researcher.

Confirmability is defined as the degree to which the outcomes can be confirmed or corroborated by others. A study should not reflect or have an indication of the researcher's judgment, and there should be minor influences by the researcher on the elucidation of the study's conclusion. The sources of information should be traceable to the original data sources, as suggested by Yin (1994). Pertaining to this research study, a chain of evidence was used in order to trace steps back to the original documents through field notes, coding of notes, and results of the coding process.

Expected Findings

In reference to being a critical ethnographic study, expected findings were that the researcher would be able to obtain and identify measures that were grounded in the information received from the individuals in the study. Over the course of the

study, the students were asked to indicate their reasoning for participation in the

Upward Bound Program. The study focused on the positive aspects of the services

that were provided by the Upward Bound Program and the support received by the

Upward Bound staff members. Pertaining to the second research question, it was

expected that the Upward Bound Program provided Hmong students the tools to gain

self-confidence to be able to produce a narrative of self-empowerment. Pertaining to

the third research question, it was expected that information would be presented from

the Hmong students that related to areas in the Upward Bound Program that assisted

in prevention of marginalization.

Ethical Issues

Researcher's Position Statement

It was essential to maintain the utmost privacy of all of the student participants

while obtaining information because of the restrictions on gathering private

information regarding children, even when the children have reached the age of 18.

To address this need, information saved or retained for the study was reviewed to

ensure that it did not identify the participants individually, and no information was

retained that could be used to identify the separate responses of participants. The

study began with approval from the IRB, underage students' guardians (where

applicable), and the program administrators. The IRB reviewed the documentation

that was sent to the Upward Bound Program director, the consent forms, and the focus

group and interview questions. Data collection required strict adherence to ethical

behavior, due to the fact that development of qualitative research includes the use of

coding, which may be influenced by biases; however, the research was supported by

the responses made available on the individual level. In order to provide verification

where needed, the consent forms, permissions, and all other related documentation will be maintained for 7 years in a secure location that can only be accessed by the researcher. Following the 7-year period, the information will be shredded so that all participants will be completely protected, for their privacy and safety.

Conflict of Interest Assessment

The researcher was not affiliated with the Upward Bound Program that was the focus of this study. The researcher was not employed by any of the school districts where the Hmong students attended.

Summary

This critical ethnography study used qualitative methods to review aspects of Upward Bound based on the important opinions of the participants. Unlike quantitative data gathered in previous studies, this study was designed to gain further knowledge into how the Hmong students viewed this program. The study included a focus group and semi-structured interviews that allowed the respondents to express their personal perceptions of Upward Bound. The researcher aimed to remain objective and aloof from the emotional responses of the participants by gathering information without bias toward the subject. As mentioned previously, the data collection and analysis were evaluated by a third party to ensure that the data were accurate.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the main findings from the research study. The research study, when analyzed holistically, aimed to portray the manner in which Hmong students viewed the Upward Bound Program. More specifically, the research study attempted to understand the perceptions of Hmong students concerning the Upward Bound Program and how their perceptions impacted their participation in the program.

The examination of the empirical literature in Chapter 2 indicated that there has been a serious lack of research conducted in this area; therefore, the results of the study may have a profound effect on the implementation of positive changes in the design of the Upward Bound Program to help future Hmong students become more motivated. Also because of the gap in the research in this area, the particular study's methodology was experimental to a certain extent. In this manner, Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study and examines the nature of the study, assessing how effective the research methodology was in trying to meet the main research aims and answer the specific research questions.

Although the aims of the research were stated earlier, it is pertinent to acknowledge the main research questions again at this stage so that the results presented is this section can be properly assessed in the context of the overall work. The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

R_1: What is the dominant narrative for Hmong students who participate in the Upward Bound Program? How are challenges of marginalization embedded in the narrative?

R$_2$: How does the Upward Bound Program currently provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization?

R$_3$: Based on the narratives of Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization?

The three research questions presented the main focus of the entire work and allowed the researcher to gain a detailed perspective of the overall perceptions of Hmong students concerning the Upward Bound Program as well as identify key changes that need to be made by organizers of the program to help improve the experience for Hmong students by combating marginalization.

Presentation of Results: The Structure of the Chapter

The study attempted to employ a critical ethnography through the use of a triangulation strategy to help meet its aims and objectives (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Thus, the study used different methods, such as an interview with the director of the program, individual interviews with the students, student focus groups, and observations by the researcher. It was hoped that by using critical ethnography, this study could empower Hmong students to share their perceptions and insights that had not been heard prior to the study.

When considering the nature of the research study and its potential complexity, particularly in terms of the analysis of the collected data, it was important for the researcher to design a method of presenting the analysis and results in a clear, easily comprehendible manner (Denscombe, 2010) in order to convey a strong understanding of the overall perceptions (Monsen & Van Horn, 2007) of Hmong students in terms of the Upward Bound Program. Therefore, before the results are discussed, a brief overview of the chapter is provided, highlighting the various

sections that have been included and the justification of the ordering of these particular sections (Blaikie, 2009).

In order to present the study findings in the most effective manner, the chapter is organized in terms of the research questions. The results that helped to answer the first research question, i.e., the dominant narrative for the Hmong students in the program and how the issue of marginalization is embedded into the narrative are provided in order to reveal how the Hmong perceived their experience in the program. Next, the nature of the program and its ability to empower are analyzed, followed by a discussion of how the Hmong students believed the program could be changed to help combat the issue of marginalization.

The study aimed to gain a greater understanding of the lived experience of the Hmong students using the triangulation method, and the data collected through this method are discussed throughout the chapter. The fieldwork conducted in the practical element of this study consisted of observations by the researcher, a focus group session, semi-structured interviews with the Hmong participants, and an interview with the program director. The information collected and collated throughout the duration of the study was assessed and analyzed using coding methods conducted by the ATLAS.ti coding program, a device used to help analyze qualitative data scientifically (Friese, 2012). The results were gathered using certain codes that looked for patterns and relationships. The findings were then analyzed in the context of models for student retention (see Appendices B and C), which highlight that students can be influenced by a number of factors, such as their perceptions, motivation, nature of the program, and other variables. It is clear from the findings that the individual students were impacted by a number of these variables personally.

Description of Participants

Initially, the work aimed to use 10 participants (five female and five male students); however, males were less inclined to participate, so the number of participants was seven (five female and two male). The students were recruited from the Upward Bound Program at a university in central Wisconsin, and the participants were observed in a variety of locations, including the Upward Bound site, the students' high school, and the Hmong Community center in the region. The Upward Bound Program officially had 28 Hmong students enlisted. They were by far the largest ethnic group in the program, with the director of the program noting that there were six Caucasian, five African American, 15 Latino, and one Native American student in addition to the 28 Hmong students. Although there were 28 enrolled, the researcher witnessed only 23 Hmong students moving into the Upward Bound dormitory on the first day. Furthermore, although 23 Hmong students were present, this study focused mainly on seven particular students, though general comments and observations were made for the group as a whole.

The seven students that formed the backbone of the research study were a mixture of age, ranging from 13-18 years old, and the ages were distributed evenly between male and female participants. This age range allowed for assessment of broad perspectives. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, as with any research involving children under the age of 18, this dissertation refers to students as Student A, Student B, and so forth. The study further sought to protect the identities of the students because it is possible that they might face persecution or resentment based on their honest responses to some of the questions (Best, 2007). This is particularly true regarding the information provided about their home lives (Noffke & Somekh, 2009).

The male students (B and G) were 14 years old and 18 years old, respectively, and had an average of 2 years' experience in the program between them. Student G had the most experience, with 3 years, while Student B was on his first year in the program. The female students ranged in age from 13 to 18. Student A was the youngest at 13, Students C and D were 14 and 15, respectively, and student E was 18. Student F did not provide an age. All female students were in their first year of the program. The fact that only one student (Student G) had more than 1 year of experience in the program was thought to impact the individual perceptions and attitudes concerning the program.

Data Analysis Methods

This study employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research studies have traditionally been limited because it is difficult for an individual researcher to appropriately and concisely analyze the large amount of data gathered (Merriam, 2009). Quantitative research studies have been viewed as much more accessible to the average researcher because they afford the ability to sort statistical data, and it is simpler to present findings (Treiman, 2009). However, more recently, techniques have been developed to help ensure that qualitative data can be as thorough and scientific as quantitative data.

The study used the ATLAS.ti program to assist with data analysis. ATLAS.ti is formidable software designed for analyzing sizable amounts of written, illustrative, auditory and video data. The program offers an assortment of tools for completing the tasks connected with any methodical plan for soft data (Friese, 2012). Furthermore, according to Katsirikou and Skiadas (2010, p.139), who conducted an analysis of the program, ATLAS.ti is "generally considered the one [program] best able to highlight

innovative methodological approaches". In addition, ATLAS.ti was "designed to facilitate the development of a theoretical model firmly based on text, that is to say, to produce scientific knowledge by permitting the categories of analysis of the researcher to interact with the meanings constructed by subjects in the discourse" (p. 139). It was clear based on the above support as well as support by Marschan-Peikkari and Welch (2004) that ATLAS.ti was appropriate for this study.

The program was used to help code the data and present the findings so that the research could be analyzed more easily. Codes were created to analyze attitudes toward marginalization, the extent to which Upward Bound helped to overcome these attitudes, the changes that participants felt were necessary to improve Upward Bound so that marginalization could be combated, and the dominant narrative amongst the Hmong students in the program.

Initially, the data were separated into student perceptions and staff perceptions. The majority of the data analysis focused on the student perceptions, mainly because these perceptions provided the most important information for answering the research questions. Although the staff perceptions, gained through the interview with the director, were important and offered a particular insight into the experiences of the Hmong students, the data from the student interviews and focus groups, as well as the observations, were richer in terms of the main aims of the research. Thus, the student perceptions ended up being coded, while the staff perceptions were not coded because there were not enough data to ensure that using the program would be beneficial.

It was necessary and beneficial to separate the student perception data into certain coding families based on three variables: the possible marginalization of the Hmong students in their school and life experiences, the variable nature of the Upward Bound Program and whether it could be said to have a positive impact on the

students, and whether the program could be changed in any way to increase the positive experience of Hmong students. The student perceptions were divided into female and male codes, mainly because it was felt that gender could perhaps be an important variable. Particularly with the student interviews, in which each student had to answer the same questions, it was important to apply the same codes for each interview.

After being divided by gender, the results of the interviews were analyzed. The interviews were read through, and certain comments were highlighted and placed in individual codes. The codes that were chosen for the work represented the key areas the researcher wished to focus on. Therefore, codes were created for any comment that referred to marginalization, both in terms of no marginalization experienced or marginalization being part of the students' lives. The student responses were also coded into three categories that reflected their experiences in the Upward Bound Program: positive experiences, positive empowerment, and changes deemed necessary to improve experiences. The codes, starting with the most broad, were:

- Student perceptions.

- Female perceptions and male perceptions.

- Marginalization (marginalization felt or no marginalization felt).

- Upward Bound Program (positive experience, positive empowerment, or changes to the program).

- No answer.

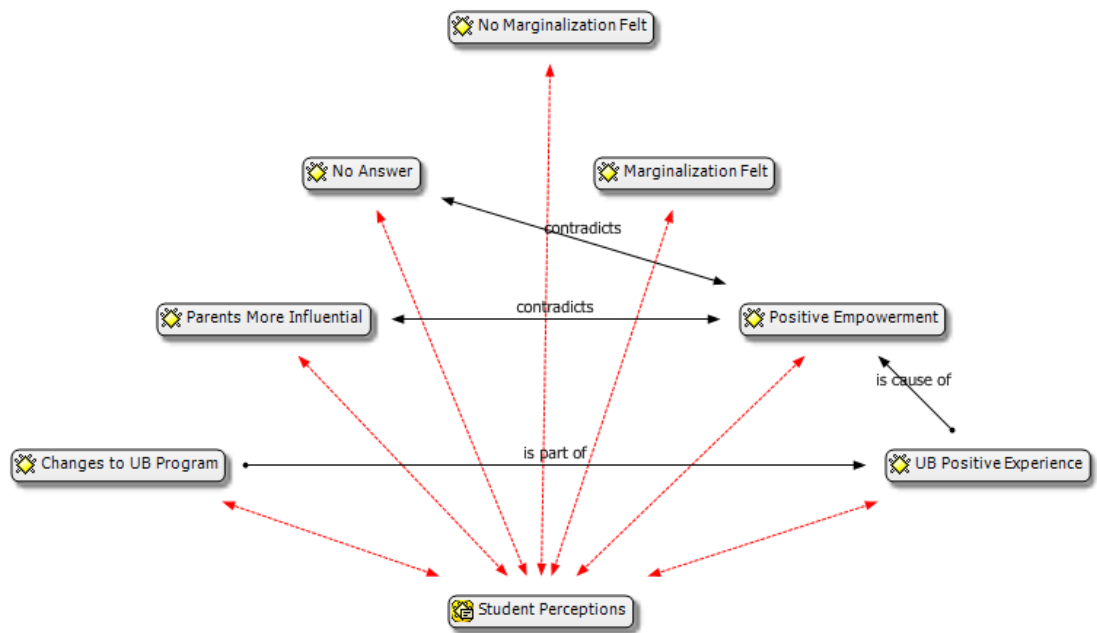The hierarchy of these codes can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Relationship of codes for student perceptions.

The researcher thought that through the creation of these particular codes, it would be possible to provide a detailed analysis of the student perceptions provided by the participants.

The ATLAS.ti program was selected because of the ability to use complex qualitative data analysis methods. As can be seen in Figure 3, the relationship of codes for the overall analysis of student perceptions included many links. For example, student perceptions were influenced by a positive experience, and the positive experience was the cause of positive empowerment, which was then linked back to student perception. Furthermore, although the students had a positive experience in the program, when asked about possible changes to the program, the majority of students shared ideas. Therefore, it was clear that there was a relationship between perceptions and possible changes.

Another example of the relationship between the different coding categories can be seen in the individual beliefs on marginalization. The overall code focused on

marginalization, but it became clear that there were a number of variables that impacted the individual participants' beliefs on whether they had experienced marginalization. In this manner, it was necessary to combine the categories of identity, gender, and marginalization. Figure 4 provides the relationship among these different codes. The figure shows that gender and identity were associated with each other, and both were a cause of marginalization. In addition, the experiences of the students in feeling marginalized were quantified as a property of marginalization.
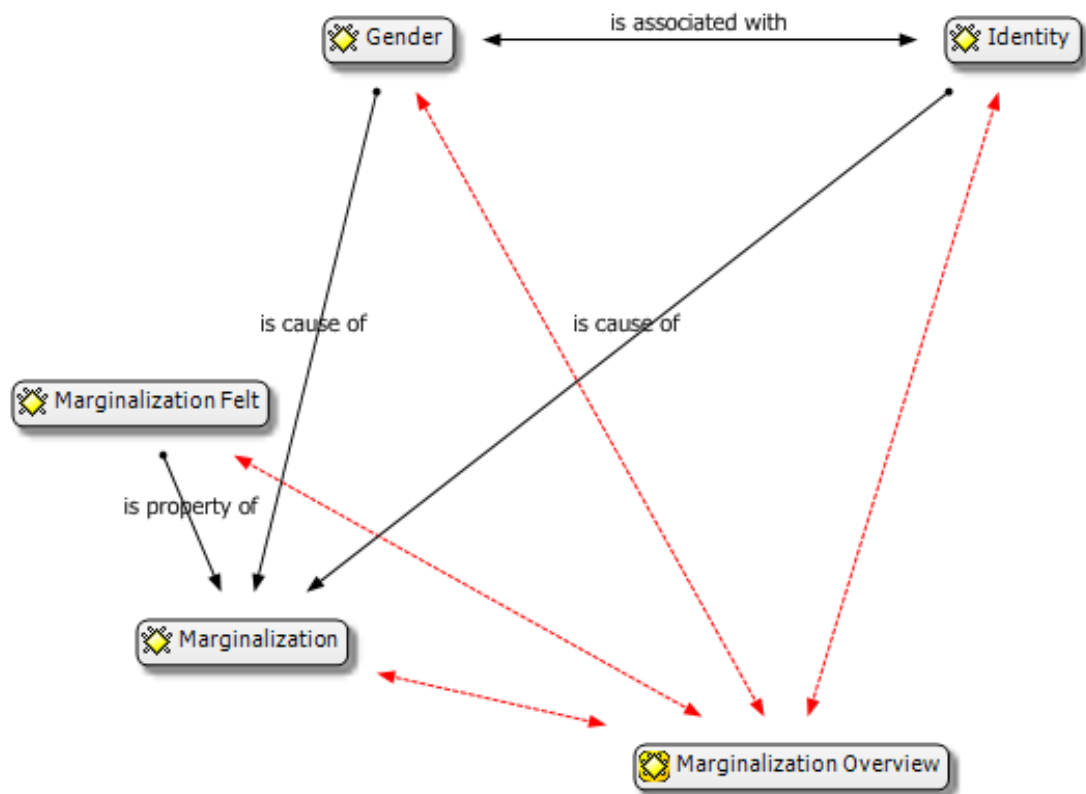

Figure 4. Marginalization relationship factors.

Discussion

The discussion section presents the findings of the study, organized by the three main research questions. The results are divided into student perceptions (using

the focus group interview, the individual interviews, and the observations) and staff perceptions. The researcher decided to separate the results discussion in this way for two primary reasons: (a) empirical literature has noted that it is possible that staff participants are likely to provide researchers with responses that they feel the researchers wish to hear, rather than truthful responses; and (b) the students and staff approached the questions from different viewpoints and a different level of experience.

The discussion does not specifically stress each individual student and each student's responses but provides an overview of the findings of the Hmong students, both male and female. The researcher thought the use of generalization was important because qualitative data analyses are not historically generalizable in their findings, which has often been seen as a limitation (Rubin & Babbie, 2009). Qualitative data "by its very comprehensiveness, means that the understanding of the data is less generalizable than results based on rigorous sampling and standardized measurements" (Rubin & Babbie, 2009, p. 230). Thus, the researcher decided that all individual responses would not be drawn upon but merely discussed in terms of gender and ethnicity. The specific representative responses included here are verbatim.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked the following: What is the dominant narrative for Hmong students who participate in the Upward Bound Program? How are problems and challenges of marginalization embedded in the narrative? The findings showed that the majority of the marginalization experienced by the Hmong student participants had been outside of the Upward Bound Program either at home, at school,

or in their local community. In addition, the data analysis revealed that marginalization and its impact differed through such variables as identity and gender.

The evidence was clear from the results that the issue of marginalization had heavily impacted the students in this study, whether consciously or subconsciously. One particular statement from the focus group interview highlighted the nature of marginalization within society and the fact that Hmong people's different physical appearance, in comparison to the large majority of those in the local community, brought with it certain assumptions:

> You know, not be what we call marginalized where people expect you to act a certain way just because of the way you look. Um-umm. I don't like that.

The analysis of the data found 19 references to the fact that the participants had experiences of being marginalized by peers, the community, and society as a whole. The types of marginalization varied, as illustrated from the two comments below:

> Sometimes people look at me and ask . . . are you Chinese or something? It makes me so mad that I just ignore them.

> I tried to date someone white and I got so much [negative] stuff from her family that I had to break it off. People would look at us, and sometimes I could tell she was getting a lot more resistance than I was, so I did not want to continue to be a problem for her, so it was best to break it off.

Comments such as these were commonplace in this research study and underlined that the Hmong students involved in the study faced tremendous marginalization in their everyday lives. Through these experiences, it was clear that the Hmong students felt a sense of injustice but also perhaps resignation to the belief

that marginalization would occur and that being marginalized was impossible to reverse.

In the focus group interview, one of the most animated discussions concerned the nature of the different incidences of marginalization, with the students almost competing with one another to tell a different story in this context. One student exclaimed:

They [other ethnicities in the community] don't want to make eye contact. Or what is it—you walk down the sidewalk and they go to the other side.

This view was heightened by a student who stressed:

When you are out in the community, people tend to keep to themselves and look at you funny.

Through these two statements, the Hmong students were generally used to experiencing inner feelings of marginalization. However, it was not only marginalization by other ethnicities but also marginalization within the Hmong community. One female student, when asked about being marginalized in the Hmong community, replied:

I have been treated differently by adults. I don't know. The Hmong people would treat me a little differently because I did not speak the language.

The one particular experience was caused by language differences. Other responses made it clear that the Hmong community is close and has a lack of communication with others, which could explain the exaggerated levels of marginalization felt. Comments regarding this included:

Basically, I have been around my people all my life, and I keep with friends and family. I get to talk to more people here, but I tend to stay with my friends away from here.

Like I said, we keep to ourselves, so I never experienced that [being treated unfairly].

If you are Hmong, you have to keep your own culture, and some Hmong cannot even speak the language. Again, I don't mind being Hmong, but at home they tell us not to lose our culture, and then at the same time, we have to be who we are when we leave home.

The statements indicate that a number of factors influenced the nature of marginalization felt by the students in the program. Essentially, other ethnicities in the community tended to act strangely toward them, with a lack of understanding about different cultures, curiosity, and ignorance possibly being the main reasons, as posited in a study by Parada and Homan (2010). However, the Hmong students also faced being marginalized within their own community, and this was heavily influenced by gender, as this study found when talking to the students during the focus group interview.

For example, one particular comment made by a Hmong female student highlighted the gender inequality. When questioned about being treated unfairly, her response seemed to sum up the feeling of gender inequality in the community but also indicated a positive defiance and contemporary way of thinking. She stated:

My brother has it so much easier because in our culture, men have it all, but that is going to change.

The simple statement serves as an overall summary of how the majority of the female participants felt about the manner in which they had been marginalized in society, particularly because of the traditional attitude toward females in the Hmong community. The differences in gender and the experiences of marginalization within

their own community were marked. Responses to the question about whether or not Hmong boys were treated differently than girls provided a range of answers:

> Hmong boys are always treated better at home because everyone has to keep their last name, which is a big thing in the Hmong world.

> At home, the parents want you to be Hmong; at school, the boys flirt. They have more rights than we do.

> Out in the community and at school, things are cool; once I get home, I am expected to clean up and do everything I am told to do. I don't get a chance to relax because I am always doing what the people at home want me to do.

> There is a big difference. It's about the size of a galaxy.

> Well, the boys, like during our shaman rituals and everything—like this is just for my family—the boys do the harder work, like, but then they, like, cutting pigs and yeah stuff like that. They do that, but, and like watch the shaman person, but we have to cook and do the dishes and do everything else, and pass out water, and clean everything, clean after the boys, and like in our culture, the boys eat first.

> Like they said, the boys are stronger and they, and, like, the parents do, like, respect the boys more, like their own. I don't know how to say it, but then yeah.

The examples clearly stress that female Hmong individuals experience a high level of marginalization within their own community. In addition, the home life for these students may be more restrictive, leading to an increased feeling of marginalization than what is felt when students are treated differently by the outside society. The responses were tempered somewhat, however, by the following admission of one female student:

> For me, my parents are treating me equal. Like they're treating the girls in our
>
> family higher than boys.

The comment is perhaps indicative of a growing appreciation of girls in the Hmong community or is an exception in a community dominated by males. Unfortunately, due to the small sample size of the study, it was not possible to conclude with any clarity which of these was the case.

The questions asked in the focus group interview resulted in a tremendous level of response regarding the different treatment along gender lines. The researcher, interpreting the atmosphere in the interview setting, concluded that it was perhaps the first time that the Hmong female participants had been able to voice their attitudes concerning gender in the Hmong community without any fear of reprisal, or perhaps they felt that the researcher was detached from their lives, so they were able to be honest concerning the level of marginalization that they had experienced.

The analysis of Research Question 1 led the researcher to develop a new theory. In an attempt to reduce marginalization, the Hmong people, particularly the younger generation, are experiencing acculturation and aspects of the culture capital theory. The notion of acculturation "occurs when an immigrant group adopts aspects of a majority culture but still retains aspects in its own culture" (Easley, 2007, p. 7). Easley noted that acculturation differs from the theory of assimilation because "with acculturation, the individual is the actor, choosing to adopt some aspects of the predominate culture while maintaining their native culture" (p. 7). Moreover, Bourdieu's (1977) Cultural Capital Theory focuses on "the key features of cultural capital as being skill and familiarity with cultural codes and practices of the dominant class" (Robson & Sanders, 2009, p. 106). Based on these two theories, this work proposes a new theory entitled the Hmong acculturation theory. This theory integrates

elements of both the acculturation and cultural capital theories and posits that the Hmong face such serious issues while attempting to fit in with the dominant people (Americans) that, in their attempts to do so, they are losing their cultural heritage and background. The concept is supported by the findings of the focus group interview, which revealed that the vast majority of students questioned did not know the detailed history of the Hmong people. These findings are supported by the following comments regarding the history of the Hmong:

> I don't really know about it, but then they—I don't know. There's like some fairy tales about this.

> I know like some of the details about it, but I don't know like the main things, and, like, yeah.

Data from the focus group indicated that the parents of the students had spent a great deal of time telling them stories about their people, but the students appeared to have chosen to forget, citing that the stories were too "depressing" for them.

> Moreover, the Hmong tradition of a close-knit community appears to be facing a challenge from the younger generation. One tradition—that of children staying at home throughout their life—is already being challenged, as indicated by the following:

> Like, my mom always went, like, it's so sad because, like, they're not even 18 yet, and they're already saying, like, they want to leave the house. They want to go have their own place.

> And then, like, the girls aren't really. Now I guess, like, our parents are trying their best to, like, decide to, like, let go of the, like, letting the boys stay.

> Despite these findings, it should be noted that the Hmong acculturation theory has a number of exceptions. When asked about whether the students in the program

wished to stay within the Hmong culture during their lifetime, two responses out of the seven were positive, acknowledging that not all Hmong people are so concerned with acculturation that they wish to desert their culture entirely:

> Okay, so going back to that question, and I'm just saying—like, when I'm older, I think I would like it if I stayed with my Hmong culture.

> If I'm older, like, when I get older, I think that I would rather be more Hmong than American.

These responses were opposed by such attitudes as:

> Well, remember, we still have to be Hmong at home, and that brings a whole lot of changes that we do not get to take away. We have gotten into trouble with my dad and moms.

> Sometimes, once I got to America, everything I saw was be American and believe the things I do; do the things the American way. It was confusing, but I had a lot more fun doing it at the same time.

The nature of these conflicting responses indicates the complex nature of this possible theory and the fact that this issue has not impacted every Hmong individual.

In conclusion, the vast majority of the Hmong students that participated in the study had experienced some form of marginalization. Marginalization had taken the form of individuals being shunned because of their inability to speak the Hmong language as well as the traditional marginalization felt by Hmong females because males receive preferential treatment in their community. The treatment in the community led to the development of a feeling of resentment and anger within the students in this study because they were upset at the notion that they had to act and behave in a certain fashion just because they were seen as outsiders rather than accepted as part of a multicultural society.

From the data gathered that the Hmong students questioned faced a number of challenges stemming from the process of marginalization. The questions regarding enrollment in higher education were met enthusiastically, but this would seem to go against the Hmong culture, as the majority of Hmong people tend to stay at home and within the Hmong community rather than leave to attend a university in a distant location. During the interviews the participants felt they were at a crossroads, with the traditional Hmong experience going in one direction and the possible future life involving higher education going in another direction. The participants were torn between the two and were attempting to combine them, but the attempt had already led to feelings of marginalization within the Hmong community, in addition to the marginalization from outside, and thus presented a serious challenge to the younger generation of Hmong people attempting to acculturate to an American way of life without losing their heritage.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked the following: How does the Upward Bound Program provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization? The results for this section are encouraging from the point of view of the Hmong students wishing to increase their level of acceptance in their current society.

Prior to discussing the data, consideration of the nature of Tinto's (1993) model of student retention (as seen in Appendix C) is necessary. Tinto's model focuses on two notions: goal commitment and institutional commitment. It is clear from a study of this model and its application in this particular study that in the participants' traditional community setting, where the Hmong people as a whole were generally looked down on by other ethnicities, the students often lacked the support of

teachers, friends, and the community as a whole. The status perhaps helped lead to a lower academic integration and due to the feeling of marginalization in society, the participants also lacked the ability to integrate socially. The findings, using the student retention model, helped to explain why the majority of participants stated that they had never thought about higher education while at school. In fact, Tinto posited that the decision to remain in education or drop out depends heavily on the levels of acceptance found by students in education.

The study also utilized Boyles' (2000) model of student retention, which again stresses a relationship between certain variables that predict whether students will remain in education. The groups of variables include the environment, student background, student attributes, and student social and academic integration level. Boyles' retention model, similar to Tinto's, helped to explain how marginalization and a lack of social integration could have had a serious and negative impact on the participants' ability to improve and progress academically.

Overall, the Upward Bound Program was found to be successful at empowering students to deal with the impact of marginalization, either in society, in the local Hmong community, or at home. The section discusses the nature of this empowerment and the different forms that it took with the students in the Upward Bound Program.

Prior to analyzing the nature of the student responses, the viewpoint of the director of the program is needed. The director, when asked about the nature of the Hmong students and the challenge that they present when they enter the program, stated:

> Well, as much as I would know the Hmong kids are just like any other kids we
> have in the program, although we have to account for their cultural practices.

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They have a very different system in which they operate, with men in the family being in charge. When I recruit girls who are newly from overseas, it is a challenge to explain why children have to go to school and that their parents are used to being responsible for teaching them everything. I imagine that it's pretty difficult on them initially.

The comment highlights that a number of factors must be taken into account when attempting to empower the Hmong students in the program. The cultural practices (e.g., the lack of gender equality) and the dominant role of the parents were the two main factors indicated by the director, and apparently from the responses provided by the students in the previous section that these forms of marginalization do exist, particularly for Hmong girls. The students emphasized that the boys are more dominant in Hmong society and that they often do not have any support from teachers in their traditional schooling. The director also discussed the importance of the staff in the Upward Bound Program, in terms of helping to empower the students in their care. She stressed:

I have hired my staff with the intent that we treat all children fairly and that we have the perfect opportunity to give these kids life-changing skills. The staff have been totally supportive and give every student not just the Hmong the chance to do well in school and be in college.

The director underlined the importance of the relationship between the staff and the students in enhancing empowerment within the students. The student responses were assessed to determine to what extent they agreed with the view of the director, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

As highlighted by the previous section, the student participants revealed that the teachers throughout their main school experience had not been supportive. Student

feedback regarding the relationship with their teachers in the Upward Bound Program was far more positive. The responses included the following:

I think the teachers are more direct. They make it fun too and laugh a lot.

Watching the older kids and how they do helps me a lot.

They teach me how to schedule my time.

They care about you more than most teachers in high school.

The teachers in UB elaborate more of what you should do. . . . I did not get a couple of things in the class and the teacher took some time to work with me while everyone did something else until I got it and then we went back to group work.

[When asked when he/she would seek out Upward Bound staff] If something came up I could not handle by myself.

The Upward Bound Program teachers and staff tend to make it easier for you to understand because we are all close.

Basically, they know you, not just as a student, and the people they hire to work with you are great . . . we need more people like them.

You can actually talk more to the Upward Bound staff. I would feel funny trying to talk like that to my school teachers.

The UB program helps you stay focused on the work. They are quick to tell you if something is not working and don't let you fail. . . . One time I was not understanding something and the teacher stopped and made sure I was okay before moving on. That does not happen in my regular schools.

The above comments show that the students had a much more positive educational experience in Upward Bound than in their traditional high school setting. The positive types of responses were common amongst participants and focused on the fact that the

teachers and staff members of the Upward Bound Program were approachable, kind, willing to discuss any subject, and willing to go beyond what was expected. In addition, the teachers made the learning process fun and enjoyable and thus were deemed likeable and personable, which in turn created a positive relationship between the students and the staff.

Although a positive relationship with a teacher or staff member does not necessarily guarantee that empowerment will be delivered to a particular student (Wilson, 2004), the relationship is viewed as a key indicator and necessary prerequisite in the equation. Thus, in this study, an analysis of how the positive relationship with the teachers and staff in the Upward Bound Program allowed the students to feel empowered was conducted. Students made many interesting comments concerning the nature of this empowerment, and perhaps the main factor was the change in attitude of the students toward attending higher education, which they attributed solely to their experience in the Upward Bound Program. When asked when they had decided to go to college or enroll in higher education, responses included:

> After being a part of the program. . . . They gave me confidence that I could do something in college and be good at it.

> After coming to the UB program. . . . They made it easier to understand. There is all this paperwork and stuff, but then they help you with it.

> After coming to the program. . . . Once I got experience of being here, I thought this is something I want to do.

The responses are indicative of the feedback of the majority of the student participants and help stress that the Upward Bound Program was a positive experience for the Hmong students that took part. In terms of empowerment, the director's claims that

the program and the staff would help students realize their potential seem to have been proven by the statements made by the Hmong students.

In summary, it is evident from the analysis of the qualitative research data that the Upward Bound Program was able to instill a sense of empowerment in the students who participated in this study. The empowerment was a result of positive relationships between the students and staff. The empowerment can clearly be used as a motivational factor to join the Upward Bound Program.

Research Question 3

The final research question asked the following: Based on the narratives of Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization? The results of the data analysis of the third research question are less detailed than the results of the previous two questions, primarily because of the limited ability of the researcher to understand how this question would be perceived by the participants. Only one major question was devoted to changes that could be made to the Upward Bound Program, and more time should have been allocated to this part of the interview. Moreover, placing this question at the end made it perhaps seem less important, and thus participants did not seem to take the question as seriously as the others and provided what turned out to be throwaway responses. The limited answers were not a fault of the participants, who worked hard throughout the interview and provided some interesting and relevant responses to a range of questions, but the responsibility of the research design, which did not place emphasis on the importance of the question. Literature has found that the final question in qualitative interviews, especially when noted that they are final questions, are usually treated lightly by the participants, who can be anxious for the interview to end and

may look to respond quickly and concisely (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). It is believed that the participants followed this practice in this study, which explains why the responses to this question are far less revealing than responses to the other two research questions.

It should also be emphasized that the research question focused on the nature of change to the Upward Bound Program that could help combat marginalization, and it became apparent that this part of the question did not necessarily register with the participants. Despite this belief that this question was not necessarily explored to its maximum potential, several of the responses were well thought out and provided useful information.

Before examining the more useful responses, it is important to highlight the responses that indicated that this question was not explained well to the participants. When asked about the changes that should be made to the Upward Bound Program (in an effort to combat marginalization), responses included:

Nothing bad about UB. It's fun and it helps us.

I like how the program operates. The time frame could start a little earlier or make the classes longer.

The similar types of comments were fairly commonplace. Many students did not suggest any changes to the program, as they felt it worked well and was enjoyable; if changes were proposed, they generally involved changes to the infrastructure of the program rather than changes to reduce the marginalization felt by Hmong students.

The director of the program, hinted at possible strategies that were used by the teachers and mentors of the Upward Bound Program to help students overcome issues of marginalization. When asked how the staff helped Hmong students with issues of marginalization, the director noted:

Every now and then, there is talk about what has happened outside of the UB

program, and my students share a lot with my staff. We know of instances

where people in cars shout bad things at my kids. It's not fair to them, and we

discuss how to ignore it and to understand the feelings that it may produce.

As indicated in the second research question, discussions like the ones the director

alludes to above clearly helped empower the Hmong students in the program and

allowed them to better deal with the impact of feeling marginalized in society. Based

on this factor and researcher observations, one change that could be made to the

program would be to offer workshops on how to deal with marginalization.

The nature of the Upward Bound Program and the ethnic diversity of those on

the program are strong indicators that a practical workshop would be effective in

helping the students overcome marginalization. Due to the ethnic make-up of the

program, the vast majority of the students will have experienced marginalization at

one time or another, which is often a reason why individuals from ethnic minorities do

not attend higher education facilities (Stulberg, 2012). The positive nature of the

relationships between the students and the staff in the Upward Bound Program would

make it possible to create a workshop that offered practical ways to cope with the

impact of feeling marginalized. Developing workshops could be an important change

stemming from comments made by students and staff, observations made by the

researcher, and the overall experience of the Upward Bound Program by the students

selected.

Analysis of Research Design

The analysis of primary data in this study gave rise to the need to examine the

overall research design of the work. This section provides a brief discussion of the

research design methods and critically assesses them in terms of how successful they were in achieving the main aims of this study. As an overview, the section discusses the existing limitations in this field of research and how this impacted the methodology designed to achieve the aims of this work. The use of ATLAS.ti is also analyzed, with a focus on how effective the qualitative data analysis system was in searching for certain themes and categories within the research findings. The analysis of the questions posed to the participants was focused on evaluating the success of these questions in terms of bringing out the necessary responses. Finally, the section reviews the holistic nature of the study and places the results within the wider context of the findings of the empirical literature, and it examines the utilization of specific student retention models through which the data were triangulated in an attempt to place the findings within a reliable, professional, and theoretical context.

Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer's (2011) work on qualitative research discusses the fact that research studies based in this methodology are often lacking in effective research methodologies because the analysis of qualitative data appears to be so focused on the interpretation of the individual researcher, thus reducing the potential reliability of the findings. Moreover, this study did not have a long history of proven analyses to serve as justification for certain choices made. For these reasons, this researcher was taking a risk by not utilizing any form of quantitative data. However, the nature of the study and its main research aims meant that any use of quantitative data collection would have been superficial and only used as back-up support for the qualitative data if findings were not gained through the use of interviews. As stressed earlier, quantitative data helps to provide statistics but does not provide the researcher with detailed findings (Creswell, 2009). This fact led to the researcher's belief that quantitative data collection would not have been successful in this study because it

would not have informed the field of further knowledge in the area of the Hmong experience in the Upward Bound Program. The richness of the data was found in the qualitative research design, and this should be celebrated.

The use of the qualitative research design method ensured a great deal more work for the researcher in terms of analyzing the data. The difficulties of analyzing qualitative data for its true meaning are well documented and include the fact that it is often hard to separate the true meaning of the individuals from the answers that they are supposed to give, as was found with the interview with the director of the Upward Bound Program. Although the director's answers were revealing, the researcher interpreted the answers she provided as guarded; the notion was understandable because her role depended on the achievement and enjoyment of the students in the program, and although anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was guaranteed, the general location of the Upward Bound Program has been revealed, which was perhaps a factor in the director's decision to provide pre-prepared answers for the interview.

There was a dramatic difference between the replies of the Hmong students and the director of the Upward Bound Program. When asked about their experiences in the program, it was clear that the Hmong students were being completely honest in their assessment, and the researcher could tell that their answers were coming quickly and straight from their heads. The concept was in stark contrast to the answers provided by the director, whose comments seemed already prepared and intended to appease the interviewer. Because of the perceived prepared answers, the researcher recommends that any future study interview a range of staff members, particularly those who have spent more time face-to-face with the students and are involved in their personal development, rather than the director of the entire program, who

perhaps does not necessarily come into contact with the students a great deal. Furthermore, a range of staff interviews would allow a comparison of data sets to help show consistencies and inconsistencies in answers. A range of interviews of different staff members would perhaps be the only way of identifying whether the experience of the Hmong students in the program differed from the prescribed experience that they were supposed to have. The study is not stating that the director of the program was intentionally not telling the truth. It just appeared, at the time of the interview and when later considering the responses, that the director was providing already-prepared statements for each question rather than responding to each question as it was asked.

It was evident that the interview with the director and the observations made by the researcher did not necessitate the use of ATLAS.ti because (a) the director's responses were of one individual and could therefore be assessed easily simply by reading the content of the responses; and (b) the researcher experienced the observations firsthand and felt that the program could not necessarily highlight anything that the researcher did not already know. However, the use of ATLAS.ti as a qualitative data analysis method for the student interviews was extremely successful. Adler and Clark (2010) noted that ATLAS.ti has been proven to be an ally for the qualitative researcher, helping provide a level of scientific inquiry that is often thought to be missing when qualitative data is the primary data collected for any research study. The ability of the program to sift through a large amount of data and highlight key themes and code them into different categories, all while exploring the relationship between these themes, is thought to be of great benefit to the qualitative researcher. In addition, the fact that a scientifically designed research program assesses the data along with the individual researcher means that the qualitative study is not necessarily dependent on interpretation by the researcher, which differs greatly

between researchers depending on what they are looking for. The reliability of the entire study can be improved significantly.

A discussion of the reliability of this entire research project is important here. Baumgarten (2012) indicated that a discussion regarding reliability is especially necessary in a qualitative research study, mainly because the subject of study is often close to the heart of the researcher and thus may prevent objectivity. To ensure reliability, this study used an objective and scientific method of data analysis for the most important part of the study, the student interviews, in order to gain an understanding of the Hmong student experience in the Upward Bound Program and how the program could help them combat marginalization felt in society, in their community, and even in their home. The student interviews provided the crux of the entire research study, and although the observations and interview with the director were informative, they could not necessarily have been used by themselves to answer the main research questions.

Moreover, the use of triangulation, to be assessed in the final discussion chapter, helped to add reliability to the study, basing the answers provided by the participants and the findings of the study within the context of the empirical review of the literature to allow for a comparison and strengthening of arguments concerning marginalization and student retention. The use of the student retention models showed that there were a number of variables that impacted the students' decision to remain in education, including the ability to integrate with society and the level of support provided by family, community, friends, and teachers. The findings of the study acknowledged that the Upward Bound Program gave necessary support to the students, as could be seen in their desire to attend college, a desire that they did not

have before the program. Thus, the use of student retention models in this work was justified and helped to explain a number of the findings through theoretical means.

The study included some important limitations, both inherent in the research process and in the research design. For example, the qualitative research methodology meant that the study only provided answers to the specific research questions asked. When designing qualitative methodologies, it is necessary to plan definitively the nature of the questions asked because the information provided will relate only to those questions. Maxwell (2004) noted that this factor is often not understood by researchers until after the research data have been collected and analyzed. The point proved to be the case with the information collected for the third research question in this study. It was not a conscious decision to place this research question last, but upon analyzing the data collected, it became clear that a great amount of pertinent information was collected and assessed on the first two research questions but not on the third. Responses by the students were not particularly developed, and the researcher should take the blame for this. When students responded that they could not think of any ways to improve the program or changes to enhance their experience, the researcher should have qualified the statement by providing possible areas of improvement to ensure that the participants had thought deeply about this question and not just passed it off as the final parting question in the interview. Because there were not qualifying statements, the results and findings for this third research question were weak in comparison to the first two and now need to be explored in more detail in a future study in this research area.

Overall, despite certain limitations, both structural and inherent to the research process, the research design used in this study made it possible to draw positive conclusions regarding the experiences of the Hmong students, the marginalization that

they had experienced, and the success of the Upward Bound Program in overcoming the marginalization. Thus, the experimental research design was successful and enabled the researcher to answer the research questions and contribute to the field of study.

Summary

In conclusion, the data were analyzed using the ATLAS.ti method of qualitative data analysis based on the three main research questions that underpinned the study. Although the majority of the data were assessed using the ATLAS.ti program, the data were also reliant on the interpretations of the researcher. Any specific mistakes in the analysis of the data are likely to be through human error, as is often the case with research studies that are embedded in qualitative research methods (Yin, 2010).

Despite this point, the research retrieved a great amount of data on the subject of the Hmong experience in the Upward Bound Program, and the vast majority of the data highlighted the positive nature of the program in helping students to develop, both academically and mentally, as well as to empower them. The focus on the three research questions enabled the researcher to continually ensure that the data collected for the study were on topic, and although the focus group interview with the seven students did not necessarily uncover as much information on the Hmong Upward Bound experience as the researcher would have liked (due to the concentration on home life in the hour-long discussion), it was still able to produce enough data at an enriched level to help ensure that the knowledge on the subject of empowerment amongst Hmong students was furthered adequately for the purposes of the empirical literature. The Hmong experience is one that is often overlooked by the literature, and

the critical ethnography of this study gave the Hmong students a voice in an arena where they have not previously had one.

The main findings of the qualitative data analysis were as follows:

- Hmong individuals face the prospect of marginalization on a daily basis from the local outside community, the inner Hmong community, and within Hmong families (the female experience).

- Marginalization takes the form of ignorant comments and physical actions that lead to the development of an emotional response to the nature of being marginalized.

- A number of challenges arise due to marginalization. Some of the challenges include the question of retaining aspects of the Hmong culture while trying to fit in with American cultural ideals and wishing to develop academically while trying to balance the Hmong cultural lifestyle.

- The Upward Bound Program provides support in a number of ways to help overcome the experience of marginalization. Some of the ways that Upward Bound helps to overcome the experience of marginalization include a focus on gender equality, development of personal and positive relationships with both friends and staff of the program, and enhancement of the belief that students should empower themselves and achieve to a high level, including a realization that higher education is a real possibility.

- The changes that can be proposed for the Upward Bound Program are minimal, but in an effort to combat marginalization, the program could run practical workshops on how to cope with the feeling of being marginalized.

The findings of this study indicate that the Upward Bound Program had a serious and positive impact on the student participants. The attitudes of the participants toward education and marginalization changed dramatically following their time in the program. Each student provided a glowing recommendation for others wishing to take part in the program, which is perhaps the best indicator of the success of the Upward Bound Program in empowering students and helping them overcome issues of marginalization to achieve personal growth and success in the future.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation focused on the ways in which the attitudes of Hmong students toward the Upward Bound Program affected their plans and inclinations regarding participation in the program and in further education. According to recent data, students that face cultural or financial challenges while continuing their education often choose to take the GED and start working instead of going to college (American Council on Education, 2009). Hmong students, as ethnic minorities within U.S. society, face such challenges.

The Upward Bound Program is one of the governmental initiatives collectively referred to as TRIO, aimed at improving the chances of disadvantaged students to continue their education. Upward Bound uses various empowerment, consulting, and educational instruments to help students either from minor ethnic groups or from low-income families to find their way to college and further development (Curtin & Cahalan, 2004; Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009). Unfortunately, previous research has focused on the academic results of Upward Bound participants (Johnson, 2009), while attitudes of the program's students toward the program itself and toward further education have been left without proper consideration. Thus, this study sought to assess Hmong students' perceptions of the Upward Bound Program. Based on the narratives of the seven Hmong students that participated in this study, the study's findings indicated that the program helped the Hmong students avoid marginalization and improved their motivation for seeking a college education.

The study included some limitations, such as a small sample size and narrow applicability of the findings. Moreover, as revealed during the process of interviewing the research participants, the structure of the interview was not perfect. As a result, the answers to the third research question did not provide a complete picture of the situation. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the study is a step toward filling the gap in research on students' attitudes toward the Upward Bound Program and similar student empowerment programs. The results of this study may be used as a starting point for further research aimed at improving programs of student empowerment and increasing helpfulness of these programs to students.

Summary of the Study

Having been discriminated and oppressed throughout their long history, the Hmong people have managed to retain their origins and identity. In 1976, the first Hmong refugees came to America and settled in La Crosse, Wisconsin, thus beginning their struggle for adaptation and acculturation in American society. One might assume that education is one of the best opportunities for immigrants to integrate into a culture. However, the Hmong people have faced serious challenges in educational opportunities. For example, prejudice and stereotyping, in combination with language problems and insufficient socialization skills, have not allowed Hmong students to achieve successful academic performance. The 1964 Economic Opportunity Act and the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act led to the development of the TRIO programs, including the Upward Bound Program, aimed at helping students like the Hmong in their pursuit of educational goals.

Even though the Upward Bound Program has been in existence since 1964, no prior known studies have examined how the Hmong students perceive Upward

Bound. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to analyze how the Hmong students perceive the Upward Bound and its effectiveness in preventing marginalization and increasing the desire to pursue a college education after high school. The study focused on three major research questions:

R_1: What is the dominant narrative for Hmong students who participate in the Upward Bound Program? How are challenges of marginalization embedded in the narrative?

R_2: How does the Upward Bound Program currently provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization?

R_3: Based on the narratives of Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization?

In order to answer the research questions, an ethnographic qualitative design was employed, and data were gathered using a focus group and semi-structured interviews with Hmong student participants, an interview with the director of the Upward Bound Program, and researcher observations. The design allowed the use of triangulation, i.e., analysis of the research data obtained from feedback from direct participants of the program and its organizers and observations from the researcher (Creswell, 2008; Maxwell, 2004). The ATLAS.ti program was originally planned as the major data analysis tool (Friese, 2012). However, the course of the research revealed that the process of data analysis could also be carried out without the software. The information retrieved during the research was not so complex as to require software processing.

The theoretical foundation of the study was the Cultural Capital Theory formulated by Bourdieu (1977) to refer to the interaction of educational qualifications, cultural goods, and embodied capital. Based on this theory, Carter (2003) posited that

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low-income students' academic performance would be worse than that of middle- or high-income students, and that retention rates would be higher for students with better financial conditions. Since the Hmong people as a rule are a low-income population, the researcher saw the Cultural Capital Theory as the best way to analyze what the Hmong students go through in their pursuit of education.

For a better understanding of the student perspective of the topic, two models of student retention were integrated into the research design: the model by Boyles (2000) and the model by Tinto (1993). Both these models include socialization, academic and personal self-confidence, and encouragement as fundamental elements. Since the research aimed at understanding whether the Upward Bound Program can affect students' plans for education, both these models supported the adequate theoretical framework for the research.

Moreover, the set of premises underpinned this study's theoretical framework further. First, it was assumed that the position and the knowledge of the Upward Bound Program director regarding supporting educational services would seriously affect the participation of the Hmong students in the program. Second, the information collected for the purposes of this research was free from any bias and stemmed from either governmental sources or reputable books and academic peer-reviewed journals. Third, the study participants were selected in accordance with the criteria that normally allow students to qualify for the Upward Bound Program. Fourth, the diverse and broad background of the Upward Bound participants added to the credibility and validity of this study.

Finally, the research was supported by the review of the relevant literature on the theories of student retention, the Upward Bound Program, and the basic methodologies of qualitative research in education. Having used governmental

publications and peer-reviewed academic articles and books, the researcher managed to collect an essential amount of information on all the listed areas of knowledge. Most importantly, the review of the literature revealed that there is a gap in research regarding the attitudes of students, and Hmong students in particular, toward the Upward Bound Program and its effectiveness. Therefore, the relevance of the research was proved once again, and the researcher proceeded to the process of data collection and analysis.

Summary of the Findings and Conclusions

As a result of the research process, the study allowed the researcher to obtain specific findings to answer the research questions. The actual research findings were presented in Chapter 4 according to each research question. Such an approach was chosen based on the researcher's belief that division of the research findings in specific sections would improve comprehension and applicability of the findings. The analysis of the collected research data was carried out using a combination of the researcher's analytical thinking and the ATLAS.ti program. As stated above, the software did not prove to be necessary for the analysis but still helped the researcher visualize the picture of the studied phenomenon.

The findings of the research were generalized for several reasons. First, the researcher aimed at conforming to the standards of research ethics and defending the privacy of the research participants. Drawing from this, students were labeled Student A, B, etc., and their narratives were generalized to see the dominant narrative of the Hmong students regarding the Upward Bound Program. Second, the three research questions inquired about the overall perceptions of the Hmong students about Upward

Bound. Therefore, generalizing the data was seen as the best way to discover the overall attitude of the research participants toward the program.

The findings related to the first research question revealed that the seven Hmong students that participated in the study experienced considerable marginalization, but it was not related to the Upward Bound Program. In other words, the dominant narrative of the Hmong students in Upward Bound was that they faced marginalization either at school or within their families. None of the students reported marginalization within the program or as a result of their participation in the program. The reported experiences of marginalization ranged from being based on the students' appearances to being related to their cultural confusion between the original Hmong culture and the American culture to which they were trying to adapt.

The focus group with the seven Hmong students revealed that their marginalization experiences were so numerous that a small competition developed among them regarding the cases of marginalization they could describe. These cases included people of other ethnic groups being reluctant to establish eye contact with them and people ignoring them and making fun of the Hmong as a whole. Students also expressed a feeling of separation of the Hmong from the rest of the community. Overall, the Hmong students reported feeling considerable marginalization while outside their ethnic surroundings.

The research revealed that the seven students interviewed experienced serious marginalization inside the Hmong community and within their own families as well. This marginalization primarily had to do with the disadvantaged position of females within the Hmong culture. The Hmong community practices the patriarchal way of life, in which males have all the privileges and females are expected to stay home and maintain the household. Thus, the female Hmong students argued that it was much

harder for them to study, as they had to cope with all their traditional duties at home and deal with prejudicial attitudes from family members because of their desire to study and pursue a higher education or career. Interestingly, there were opposite reports on this topic, with some students reporting equal treatment of males and females within their Hmong families and one female student even pointing out that in her family, the females were dominant. The finding allowed the researcher to assume that the traditional patriarchy of the Hmong families is not a general characteristic of the whole Hmong culture. In addition, the fact that some of the females experienced equal treatment gave the researcher the idea that the patriarchal customs are losing their strength in this culture and will eventually evolve to recognize the equality of males and females.

Another aspect of marginalization within the Hmong community had to do with the confusion between the original Hmong culture and the need to assimilate to the American culture. In particular, the students reported that at home, they were expected to preserve their roots and culture, but outside their community, they were expected to act "normally," i.e., in accordance with the American lifestyle. Since these two expectations often contradicted each other, students expressed confusion and considerable pressure to combine the seemingly incompatible cultures. More specifically, some of the students said that they did not know the Hmong language but still wanted to retain their Hmong identity. At the same time, they had to continue with their education to become integrated in American society. Such conditions made them unconfident in their abilities and potential. On the basis of these findings, the researcher formulated a new theory, referred to as the Hmong acculturation theory, to explain the marginalization experiences of Hmong students. According to this theory,

the Hmong students are losing their original identities while trying to integrate into American society.

To support these findings, the researcher referred to answers of the interviewed students who argued that they did not know much about the Hmong history or culture. They did not speak the Hmong language, and all they could remember were the fairytales and myths told to them by their elders. Obviously, the connection of these students to their Hmong roots had become weaker over the years. At the same time, they had not totally succeeded in their integration into American society. They were still perceived as outsiders. Thus, the marginalization was created: the Hmong students did not feel totally connected with their Hmong roots but also did not feel accepted in American culture.

Finally, the researcher surmised that the students interviewed were torn between the Hmong tradition of many generations living under one roof and the educational perspective of going away to college. Thus, it became obvious that the main reason for Hmong students not continuing their education was tied to the marginalization resulting from cultural confusion. Most important to this study was that the issues of marginalization for the research participants did not seem to be connected with the Upward Bound Program. The attitudes of the participants toward the Upward Bound became clear with the findings of the second research question.

In answering the second research question: How does the Upward Bound Program currently provide support to empower students to prevent marginalization? Hmong students provided overwhelmingly positive answers regarding the Upward Bound Program. In particular, the general tone of the answers could be characterized as highly appreciative and supportive of the program. All the students stated that the program helped them find their way in the American educational system. Specifically,

the students reported that Upward Bound made it much easier for them to understand the system, its requirements, masses of paperwork, and other aspects.

The findings of the interview with the Upward Bound Program director revealed that the director's opinions of the Hmong students were high. The director expressed her respect and appreciation of students from all ethnic groups, including the Hmong. She also stated that the program staff members were selected based on their ability to help promote student empowerment and that special emphasis was put on the communication skills of the staff. The interviewed students confirmed this, indicating that open communication with the Upward Bound staff was one of the main advantages of the program. In addition, all seven students reported that the teachers in the program were more caring and interested in their issues. Some students reported that the program teachers actually stopped whole classes to explain certain difficult points to them personally. The Hmong students revealed increased motivation as a result of the teachers caring about their performance and helping them with such things as time management skills, paperwork, and communication and socialization skills that they might need while in college. The students especially stressed the difference between the program teachers and the teachers they had at school; according to the students, they could not even imagine such an open and easy communication with their schoolteachers that they had with the Upward Bound staff.

The students confirmed that their decision to continue education and go to college was the direct result of their participation in the Upward Bound Program. When asked when they had decided to pursue further education, the consensus among students was that it was during the Upward Bound Program. Before the program, they perceived college as something they could not cope with, but the program staff managed to show them that the system was not as complicated as they had imagined.

Most importantly, the majority of students claimed that the program provided them with the confidence they needed not only in class but also in socialization and overall interpersonal communication skills.

Thus, the researcher concluded that the Upward Bound Program actually fulfilled its function of empowering students in respect to their further educational choices. Though this finding was applicable only to the studied population, it is still an important step in the process of researching the Upward Bound Program and the attitudes of the Hmong students toward it. At the same time, given the high evaluation of the program by the interviewed students, the researcher did not receive the reflective answers to the third research question that were expected.

In answering the third research question: Based on the narratives of Hmong students, what changes should be made to the Upward Bound Program to combat marginalization? The question was treated as lacking in significance by the research participants, and the Hmong students did not provide much feedback. The only ideas that were expressed touched on the possible prolongation of the class duration so that students could receive more useful information.

On the one hand, the lack of responses illustrates the absolute appreciation of the Upward Bound Program by the Hmong students. On the other hand, however, the lack of responses might have been prompted by the fact that the third research question was announced to be the last one in the interview. Since the focus group discussion lasted for an hour, one might assume that the students wanted to get finished and get home sooner (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The researcher admits that structuring the focus group discussion this particular way was a minor setback of the research design. As a result, the researcher did not manage to get essential data on

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the possible improvements to the Upward Bound Program in relation to marginalization management skills of students.

On the whole, the research managed to answer all the research questions, even though the third research question was not answered to the desired degree. Thus, the researcher was able to conclude that the Hmong students that participated in the Upward Bound Program in a university in Wisconsin faced considerable marginalization both in their families and in society, but the students did not associate this marginalization with the Upward Bound Program, which they rated high for its role in their empowerment as students and as individual personalities. Finally, all students saw the only possible improvement of the program as extending the duration of the classes.

Recommendations

The research findings allowed the researcher to compile a set of recommendations for both the future research of the Upward Bound Program and the development of the program.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is needed on examining the attitudes of Hmong students toward the Upward Bound Program but should aim at avoiding the limitations of this study. To achieve this, the research should (a) use a larger sample or number of participants, (b) make the sample more inclusive in age groups and equal in representation of both sexes, and (c) involve Hmong students from various locations in the United States. Though this study was able to garner specific data on Hmong students' perceptions of the Upward Bound Program, to be able to generalize the

findings, further research needs to examine the attitudes of other Hmong students toward Upward Bound in other locations to see if these findings truly reflect the perceptions of Hmong students in general or are simply representative of the seven students interviewed in this study.

Recommendations for Practice

Though this study did not manage to retrieve much data regarding the Hmong students' attitudes toward possible improvements to the Upward Bound Program, on the basis of the rest of the research findings, the researcher considers it essential that marginalization coping strategies be added to the curriculum of the Upward Bound Program. The reason for this recommendation is simple: the Hmong students experience marginalization in numerous spheres of their lives, and Upward Bound clearly empowers students in academic and personal ways. Therefore, if the Hmong students are shown how to cope with marginalization during their Upward Bound classes, the effectiveness of the coping strategies may be higher. Since the Hmong students feel comfortable communicating with the Upward Bound staff, receiving such help from the staff would be more effective than it would be if assistance were offered by other specialists with whom they did not have such a positive relationship.

Adding marginalization coping strategies to the Upward Bound Program services would complete the empowering function of the program. The program already provides assistance to students with the other challenges they face in the educational system, such as time planning and management and communicational skills; marginalization is the only visible issue of the Hmong students that the Upward Bound Program does not address. Adding instruction on how the Hmong students

should react to discriminatory and offensive comments and actions would be a valuable improvement to the Upward Bound Program.

Implications

The findings of the current research, despite the study's limitations, provide considerable implications for further research in the area of the Upward Bound Program and the Hmong students. The implications drawn from the findings of this study are as follows:

1. Hmong students tend to experience marginalization both inside their ethnic communities and in the society outside their traditional life settings, including school.

2. Hmong students perceive the Upward Bound Program as an effective tool of empowerment. The students believe their participation in the program is responsible for their decision to go to college.

3. The Upward Bound Program helps the Hmong students to be better prepared for the organizational and socialization aspects of a college education, improve their time management and planning skills, and become better oriented to the mass amount of paperwork involved in postsecondary education.

4. Hmong students see extension of class duration as the only possible improvement to the Upward Bound Program.

5. Further analysis allows for the argument that marginalization coping strategies may be a strong improvement of the Upward Bound Program.

The above implications are based on the findings of the study and can serve as starting points for further research on the Upward Bound Program. An important

point to understand based on the research findings is that even though the Upward Bound Program is effective and highly valued by Hmong students, there are other challenges that do not allow improving student retention to the desired level. Marginalization is one of these challenges, and the fact that Hmong students do not receive instruction on how to cope with it decreases the effectiveness of the Upward Bound Program as a student empowerment tool. Therefore, the curriculum recommendation provided by the current research might improve the effectiveness of the Upward Bound Program. Further research is needed to widen the scope of knowledge on the attitudes of Hmong students toward Upward Bound. Studies with larger samples and improved inclusivity would test the findings of this research and identify whether they can be applied to wider populations of Hmong students in any other locations. In the meantime, administrators of the Upward Bound Program can benefit from the findings of the current research, which will allow them to understand Hmong students' current perceptions regarding what works in the Upward Bound Program and what changes can be made to make the program more effective and operational.

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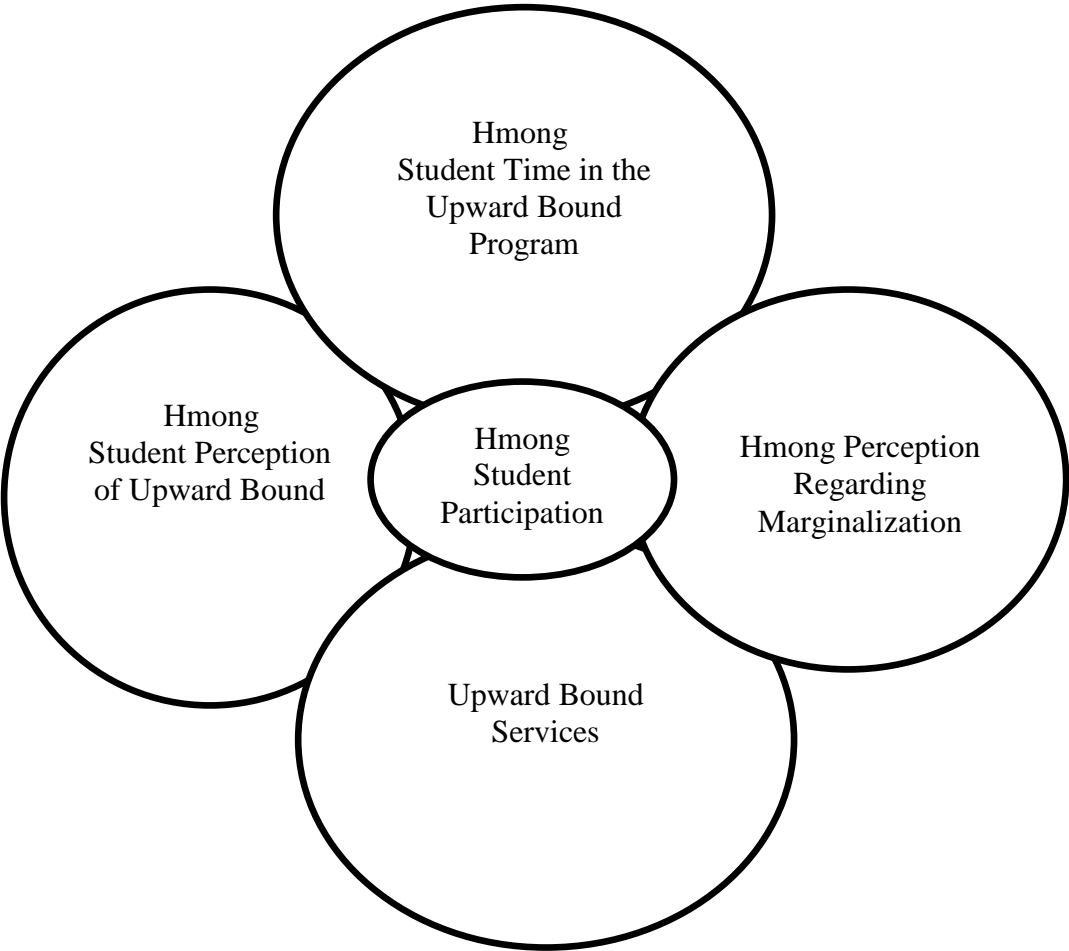Noffke, S., & Somekh, B. (2009). *The Sage handbook of educational action research.* London, England: Sage.

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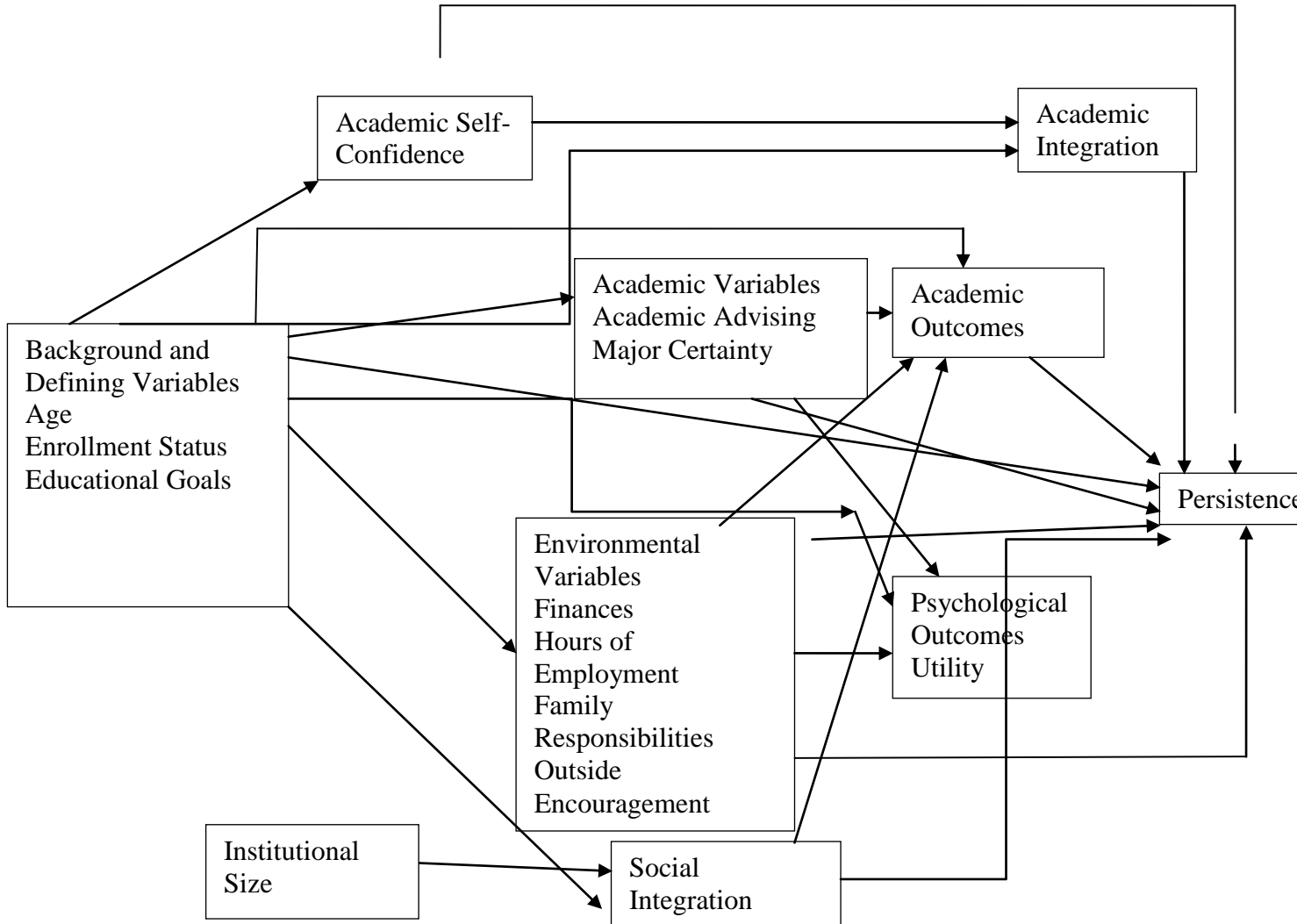
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APPENDIX A. HMONG STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN UPWARD BOUND

Hmong
Student Time in the
Upward Bound
Program

Hmong
Student Perception
of Upward Bound

Hmong
Student
Participation

Hmong Perception
Regarding
Marginalization

Upward Bound
Services

APPENDIX B. BOYLES' MODEL OF STUDENT RETENTION

APPENDIX C. TINTO'S MODEL OF STUDENT RETENTION
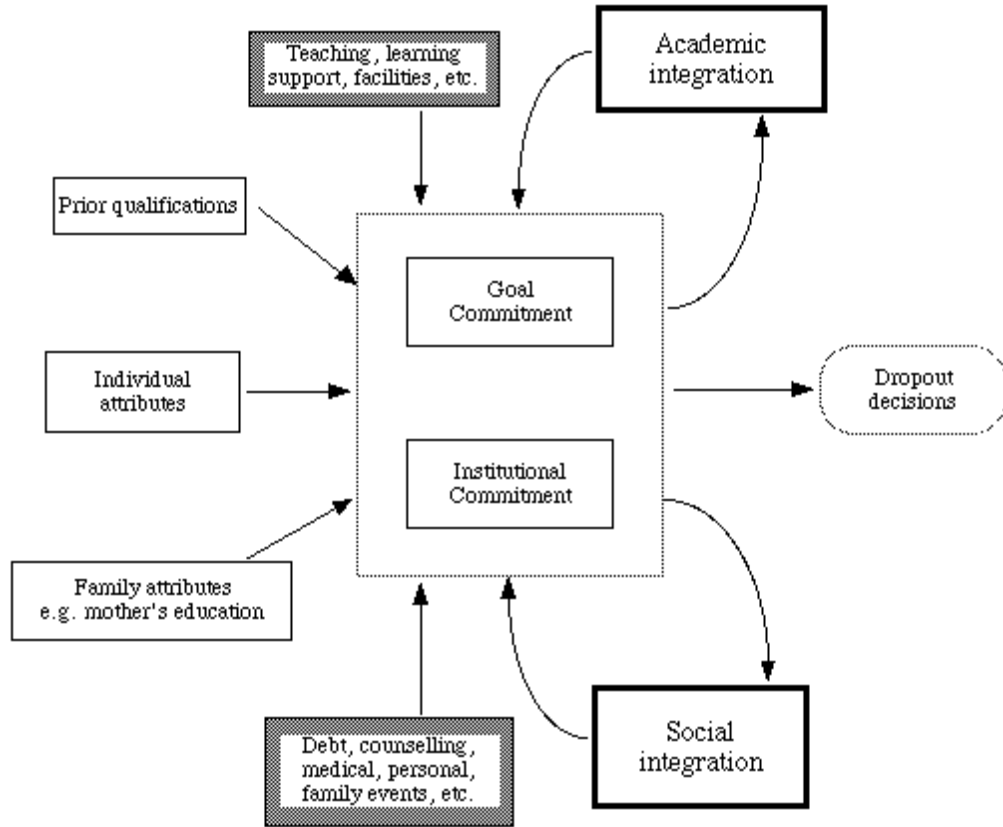
APPENDIX D. STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Quality Criterion	Possible Provision Made by Researcher
Credibility	Adoption of appropriate, well-recognized research methods
	Development of early familiarity with culture of participating organizations
	Random sampling of individuals serving as informants
	Triangulation via use of different methods, different types of informants and different sites
	Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants
	Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues
	Negative case analysis
	Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors
	Peer scrutiny of project
	Use of reflective commentary
	Description of background, qualifications and experience of the researcher
	Member checks of data collected and interpretations/theories formed
	Thick description of phenomenon under scrutiny
	Examination of previous research to frame findings
Transferability	Provision of background data to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made
Dependability	Employment of "overlapping methods"
	In-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated
Confirmability	Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias
	Admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions
	Recognition of shortcomings in study's methods and their potential effects
	In-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized
	Use of diagrams to demonstrate audit trail

Source: Shenton (2004)

APPENDIX E. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I would like to take about a half hour to speak with you about your experiences as a student in the Upward Bound Program.

Student History
Gender: Male _____Female _____Age_____
Let's begin by telling me a little about your background in school and the Upward Bound Program.
How old are you? _____
How many people live in your family? _____
How long have you been in the Upward Bound Program?
How did you find out about the Upward Bound Program?
Why did you decide to join the Upward Bound Program?
Did anyone provide a recommendation for the program?
Did you know other students who were in the program or currently are in the program?
Did you have older brothers or sisters who were in the Upward Bound Program?
Since you began the program have you recommended the program to any of your friends?
What is the reason for being a part of the Upward Bound Program?
Is the Upward Bound Program effective in helping you with that?

Upward Bound Regular and Summer Program Classes
Let's take some time to talk about the Upward Bound Program's regular and summer program.
Are you planning on participating in the summer program or have you already done so?
What classes are offered in the Upward Bound Program?
Are the classes taught in the Upward Bound Program taught in a way that is different than in high school?
Please provide me with an example.
Have the Upward Bound Program classes helped you with school?
How?
Can you provide me with an example?
Is there a part of the summer program that you find most helpful?
What makes you believe that this is such a big part of the summer program?
Understanding that programs change, if you were in charge of the Upward Bound Program, what is something you would change about the Upward Bound Program?

Upward Bound Program Staff
Moving right along, let's talk about your experiences with Upward Bound Staff members.
How often would you say you speak to the Upward Bound staff during the school year?
How would you describe your relationship with the program staff?

Who are the Upward Bound staff members that you see on a regular basis?
What is the main reason that you would seek out Upward Bound staff member(s)?
Could you tell me about a recent experience with an Upward Bound staff member?
If you are not at the Upward Bound Program area, can you contact the staff members for assistance? If so, please provide me with an example.
Do you perceive Upward Bound Program staff the same way you do high school staff? If not, what do you believe to be the difference?

Assisting in Student Goals
What do you remember about the first time you talked about going to college? Who was the person or people you talked to about this?
What did you learn about going to college from the Upward Bound Program staff?
Is the information you received from the Upward Bound Program staff different from the information you received at your high school? How?
Do you think you will attend college after high school?
When did you decide that you wanted to go to college?
Did the Upward Bound Program influence your perceptions of going to college? How?
If you were to tell a classmate in high school about the one way the Upward Bound Program has made a difference in your life, what would it be?

APPENDIX F. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

Welcome. I want to personally thank you for being a part of this discussion.

(Moderator Introduction)
The focus of this study is to gain your perspective of the Upward Bound Program in relation to your personal experiences in the program. I would like to spend about an hour talking with you about your history with the Upward Bound Program and what the Upward Bound Program has done to assist you with any marginalization challenges you may have experienced.

I want to ensure that you understand issues of marginalization; basically, marginalization has to do with being placed in a position of marginal (limited) importance, influence, or power. I am very interested in understanding your experiences pertaining to being treated fairly and how the Upward Bound Program may have affected you in this process.
What you see is the digital voice recorder in the middle of the table. I want to ensure that I do not miss any valuable information that the group may offer.

1. How do you identify yourself in the United States: Hmong, Asian, Asian American, Hmong American, or another name? (Why?)
2. Can you describe a time when the Upward Bound Program assisted you during an experience where you felt like you were being treated unfairly?
3. Relating to issues of language, do you speak Hmong, and what is the response of people who are not Hmong when you speak your own language?
4. Tell me about your experiences with people in high school and the community related to how they treat you as a Hmong community member.
5. In your experience, do people tend to react to you differently, and if so, how does this impact the way you see yourself?
6. In your experience, do members of the Hmong community believe that they are being treated unfairly, and if so, provide an example of why they believe this to be true?
7. Pertaining to self-identification as a member of the Hmong community, would you want a change or changes in how the Upward Bound Program supports you? If so, how?
8. When it comes to the experiences that Hmong students have in high school or the La Crosse community, are there any areas that the Upward Bound Program could or should assist you with? Why?

APPENDIX G. TEACHER/DIRECTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A. Background

Please fill me in briefly on your background. How did you come to be on the Upward Bound staff?

How many years have you been working with Upward Bound?

Why did you decide to work as a director / for the Upward Bound Program?

What attracted you about working with Upward Bound?

How would you describe your leadership style?

What are your duties as the director / teacher?

Which of those duties do you consider to be making the biggest difference for the students and how?

B. Students

Can you tell me about the Hmong students this year?

What is the ethnic diversity among the student in Upward Bound?

In what ways do the needs of Hmong students differ?

C. Staff

About the staff now, how do staff members interact with the Hmong students?

What do you look for regarding the teachers in the Upward Bound Program?

Does the staff have training in diversity issues? If so please describe the training.

Do most mentors work for the program throughout or is their turnover rate high?

How does the staff assist Hmong students with any issues of marginalization?

APPENDIX H. OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

A. How an observation of the Upward Bound Program site will be conducted.
The observation will be made at the Upward Bound Program site, at their study groups, at field trips and create a personal dialogue with them. The observation will seek answers to the following key areas of interest:

1. Reviewing of the evaluation questions that will culminate in generation of a list of aspects regarded as important based on the observation and the resulting data.
   - How have the teachers participating in the Upward Bound Program Staff project's professional development provided their students with learning and working opportunities to solve challenging problems they face?
   - How are students using multiple approaches to problem solving to offer more optional methods?"
2. Identification of the questions to be asked of the participants before the observation is made.
3. Classroom observation—this is aimed at evaluating the Upward Bound Program Staff program and not the participating teachers.

B. Students will be observed over a period of time (16 weeks).
Given the triangulation approach, the observation will include classroom learning, sessions of professional development, and community meetings and shall be observed among the Hmong students for over 16 weeks. This will be documented in the observation form below.

Observation Form

Period Activity	week 1	week 2	week 3	week 4	week 5	week 6	week 7	week 8	week 9	week 10
Date of Observation										
Grade Level										
Observation Number										
Teacher Observed										
Number of Students										
Learning Activity Observed										
Subject Area(S)/Theme										
Purpose										
Learning Outcomes										
Duration of Activity										
Learning Space										
Resources										
Observation Notes										

C. Interactions with friends, staff members and teachers in the Upward Bound Program.
This interaction will seek to answer the following questions:
1. How are teachers encouraging students to focus in their efforts towards achievement of these objectives?
2. Identify some of the problems the students have been coming with in response to the program
3. Whenever teachers ask students to do anything in their groups, do they feel marginalized in any way?
4. As students return their responses to group work they participate in, how do teachers compare their responses with respect to gender balance in these groups?
5. How do teachers reinforce the possibility of diverse strategies the students have in tackling internal differences in these groups?

D. Field trips, library study activities

Trips will seek specific information from the students in hoe they respond to the needs and problems they face while studying. Library studies will be conducted from the program site to create more opportunity for interaction with students in the program. During these sessions, the following will also be documented:

1. The number of different approaches to problem solving devised by the students.
2. The total time a small group of students came up to ask for assistance from the instructor.
3. The total time when the instructor ended up giving a straight answer to a problem to capture the observation of how this is done.
4. The nature of probing questions used by the teacher in asking students while they solve their problems.

E. Transportation from home to the Upward Bound Program

Transportation will be supported entirely by the program budget.

F. Out of class activities, being in the community

Out of class activities will include interaction with members of the community especially parents and guardians to the students in the Upward Bound Program. The information gathered here will be part of the data used in the triangulation.

G. Interactions with community members

Partnership activities will be used during the interaction with the community members. As indicated, emphasis will be laid on members of the school community directly involved in the Upward Bound Program to maintain focus. Some of the activities will include counseling sessions with the students, free interactive plays, and other outdoor activities they may be involved.