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Leadership Prototypes and Cultural Variations Amongst Hmong Men and Women Working Professionals in Minnesota

Ying K. Yang
Southeastern University - Lakeland

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Ying K. Yang

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Has been approved by his committee as satisfactory completion of the dissertation

requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved By:

Dr. Joshua Henson, Ph.D., Chair

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

Dr. Bethany Peters, Ph.D., Committee Member

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

Dr. Nhia Vu, Ed.D., Committee Member

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

Southeastern University Institutional Review Board Approval:

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Abstract

Since arriving in the United States in 1975 as immigrants, the Hmong have faced many cultural challenges and were forced to adapt quickly. In 2011, the Hmong lost their last officially recognized leader, General Vang Pao. With the Hmong assimilating to the American culture, it is unclear whether their leadership prototype has changed due to cultural variation. This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to examine leadership prototypes and cultural variation amongst working professional Hmong men and women in Minnesota. Minnesota was chosen because it is home to the largest Hmong population in the United States. This study targeted understanding the lived experiences of four Hmong male and four Hmong female participants between the age of 28 and 45 years. In-person interviews were conducted to collect data. The results indicated that cultural variation impacted the leadership prototypes of Hmong men and women working professionals in Minnesota. Many participants stated a change in leadership prototype as they learned to balance Hmong and American values. The results support being more aware of Hmong household challenges, cultural variation, gender differences, and how this may affect their leadership prototypes. In addition, the results indicated that the leadership prototypes of Hmong men and women working professionals in Minnesota are leaders who are empathetic, are compassionate, lead by example, and keep their word.

Keywords: leadership prototype, cultural variation, Hmong, leadership

Dedication

I want to dedicate this dissertation to Nkauj Ib Yang and Paaj Dlawb Yang. Thank you two for always being my reason why and for always being the smile to my day. Daddy loves you both to the moon and back! You two have a bright future ahead of you, and I can't wait to see whom you two will become. Always remember to live life, believe in yourself, follow your dreams, and have fun!

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Leadership has consistently evolved throughout history. It is common to find different definitions of leadership among other groups and parts of the world (Bottery, 2006). Cultural variation indicates the differences between people and the different cultural norms and behaviors that have developed over time due to social learning, and this variation may be present at both the group and individual levels (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). Cultural variation may influence an individual's perception regarding many aspects of life, including values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviors (Heine et al., 2008). Akhavan Tabassi and Hassan Abu Bakar (2010) stated that explaining leadership has been difficult because of all the aspects that go into defining leadership. Schein (2010) stated that leadership is to manage culture, as it is the core of leadership. Because notions of leadership are often culturally influenced, individuals who spend time in one or more cultural communities may develop diverse perspectives on leadership due to being influenced by two or more social learning environments (Lee et al., 2014). The concept of a leadership prototype proposes that an individual's cognitive perception of a leader is shaped by biases and the cultural environment they are surrounded by (Weiss & Adler, 1981).

As the Hmong population grew in the United States and acclimated to their new home, their perceptions of and preferences for leadership experienced change. Lor and Yang (2012) wrote that the Hmong traditionally relied on male individuals to lead while women stayed home to do housework. Most of these male leaders were warlords, as the Hmong were constantly at war in China and Laos (M. Vang, 2015). This division in workload and responsibilities also created a gender divide between males and females in the community; however, Lee (1985) stated that the Hmong in Laos focused more on farming and providing for the family, while male leaders concentrated on rituals and traditions such as marriage, funeral ceremonies, and new year celebrations. As Hmong assimilate into the American culture, the need to reconsider what the Hmong people look for in a leader is essential, as different leadership needs are present in the Hmong community.

The Hmong people's leadership prototype is based on the different cultures and regions they migrated to throughout their existence (Yang, 2001). As leadership needs change, the leadership prototype changes as followers' cognitive schemata transform (Offermann & Coats, 2018). Within a culture, variables such as gender, age, and generational values may impact an individual's leadership prototype (Johnson et al., 2008). The traditional Hmong culture consists of layers of identities defined by gender expectations (Fang, 1997). The immigration of Hmong refugees to America has also influenced the new perception of a Hmong leader (Vang, 2015). The cultural variation of the Hmong's history has affected leadership, and future leaders' ideas remain unclear (Lor & Yang, 2012).

Cultural variation is the integration of diversity based on acquired differences (Scelza et al., 2020). Cultural variation is affected by the rate of cultural innovations and how they are transmitted among individuals within a population (Aoki et al., 2011). Similarly, Eisen and Ishii (2019) describe cultural variation as the diversity in social practices that develop different cultures worldwide. Cultural variation worldwide creates patterns of perception based on geographical area and cultural norms (Čeněk et al., 2020). Chang and Algoe (2020) wrote that different people in the world appreciate the same celebration differently based on their cultures and the region, such as gratitude demonstrations and perceptions. Paramova and Blumberg (2017) agreed that cross-cultural variation affects leaders' styles. These different cultural variation influences can also change over time, particularly for the Hmong, as they assimilate with the American culture after the death of General Vang Pao.

Since the death of General Vang Pao in 2011, there has been uncertainty regarding what the Hmong are looking for in a leader (Lor & Yang, 2012). General Vang Pao was known for his charisma, courage, and military intelligence (Vang & Hein, 2015). Vang (2010) stated that General Vang Pao used his influential power but assertive leadership style to lead over 40,000 Hmong soldiers to battle during the Vietnam War. General Vang Pao became a leader by rising in the ranks of the Royal Lao Army (Ratliff, 2010). In addition, the Hmong people respected General Vang Pao due to his love for the Hmong people (Vang, 2010). General Vang Pao is

the sole leader of the Hmong people in the United States and the role model for all other Hmong leaders (Lor & Yang, 2012). With the passing of General Vang Pao and acclimating to the American culture, there is a need to look at the changing needs of Hmong leadership perceptions.

Before General Vang Pao, there were also many influential Hmong leaders. Tapp (2003) affirmed that the Hmong king and warlord Chiyou led and fought the Chinese government for many years but were ultimately defeated and driven out of Northern China to the South of China. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, many Hmong leaders were also military leaders as there was a need to fight back against the heavy taxation from the Chinese government (Yang, 2003). In Laos, the Hmong had many leaders, such as Lao Bliayao, Touby Lyfound, Moua Chia Xa, and Tou Geu Lyfong (Lee, 1985; Thao, 1997). These Hmong leaders held many government positions, such as village chief, district administrator, mayor, and governor by the French Administrator in Laos (Thao, 1997). Many of these Hmong leaders in Laos were political and government officials compared to previous leaders in China, who were more military focus leaders. The demand for a new Hmong leader became apparent with the start of the Vietnam War (Vue, 2015). The continuous change in the Hmong history indicated that the perceptions and needs of leadership are determined by location, time, and environment.

Yang (2013) mentioned that the Hmong have no clear vision of whom they want their next leader to be in the United States. The qualities and characteristics of an ideal leader to fit the Hmong people while leading a group of people who comprise a mixture of American and Hmong culture are enigmatical (Xiong, 2015). The cultural variation of the Hmong people in America caused growth, change, and transition in many of their traditional ways (Lee et al., 2016). While the Hmong migrated from one geographic area to another, they assimilated and changed to fit their culture (Lee & Green, 2010). The constant migration caused cultural variation, impacting the Hmong people's leadership prototype.

When the Hmong came to the United States in the mid-1970s, cultural variation caused hardship in assimilation. The Hmong were mountain farmers in Laos before the Central Intelligence Agency came and recruited them to fight the

Vietnam War, known as the Secret War (Tatman, 2004). The Hmong's primary mission was to save American pilots who had fallen behind enemy lines (Vang & Flores, 1999). In the wake of the Secret War, General Vang Pao was chosen as the Hmong leader based on his military experience and background (Vang & Flores, 1999). As the Hmong assimilated into the American culture, however, it has become evident that the Hmong people have different needs in the United States (Vang & Hein, 2015). As other conditions have changed, leadership expectations have shifted for the Hmong. Lee (1985) stated that the Hmong leaders in Laos and Thailand are selected based on rituals and traditions such as marriage, funeral ceremonies, and new year celebrations. Vang et al. (2021) stated that the American culture makes traditional Hmong practices difficult because of gender differences and leadership structure. While the American culture is new and there are barriers, the Hmong continue to acclimate and adjust.

In attempts to understand the progress of the Hmong in acclimating to the United States, there have been numerous studies on leadership, education, socioeconomic status, and other cultural topics (Moua, 2001; Vang & Flores, 1999; Vue, 2015; Xiong et al., 2018). Xiong (2015) suggested that intergenerational leadership in the younger Hmong generation prefers a more charismatic approach to leadership and is opposed to a more authoritative leader. This research, however, was done across three generations with different upbringings, and participants represented specific Hmong clans (Xiong, 2015). Another study by Yang (2022) looked into leadership regarding leadership in higher education and specifically toward Hmong women. Moua (2020) researched transformational leadership from a Hmong perspective; however, this is a limitation because the study was done in Wisconsin and Minnesota holds the largest population of Hmong people in the United States. Moua (2020) stated that her future recommendation is to do it in a larger Hmong population geographic. One study regarding Hmong leadership and cultural perception does exist. This study was conducted in Tulare County, California, and only included Hmong women (Saechao-Elizalde, 2014). Vang (2003) suggested looking at Minnesota for future studies because it is home to the most significant population of Hmong in the United States. Although some

leadership studies exist, there is little research on Hmong men and women while looking at leadership prototypes and how American culture has influenced them.

Although the Hmong still practice their patriarchal leadership and kinship structure, the changing culture has also changed how leadership is viewed (Vang & Flores, 1999). In this study, I explored leadership prototypes and cultural variations within a targeted audience of Hmong men and women in Minnesota amongst various professional fields. The target population was Hmong individuals who have experienced an upbringing in both traditional Hmong culture and American culture. This qualitative phenomenological study included semistructured interviews to explore the personal experience of Hmong men and women in Minnesota regarding cultural variation and perception of leadership.

Statement of the Problem

Many Hmong came to the United States in 1975 as a result of war. One of the biggest challenges for the Hmong people is acclimating to the American culture (Yang, 2012). Although the Hmong relocated throughout the states, Minnesota has the largest Hmong population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). With a sizeable Hmong population in Minnesota, Vue (2015) stated that there needs to be a clear leader in the Hmong community. Lor and Yang (2012) also mentioned that after the death of General Vang Pao, the Hmong community struggled to identify their next leader. One of the struggles is the uncertainty of what the Hmong people seek in their next leader (Moua, 2020). As the Hmong grow and adapt to the American culture in their new home, who and what their leader will look like is still unclear. Within all the uncertainty, it is essential for emerging and future Hmong leaders to recognize and understand the mixed culture that the Hmong community in the United States is embracing (Saykao, 1997). The lack of a transparent leadership prototype makes this research essential for future studies.

In addition to unclear leadership expectations and requirements, research has been scarce regarding the Hmong leadership prototype in Minnesota. With over 320,000 Hmong currently living in the United States, Minnesota is home to approximately 65% of the population (Lee & Green, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Although several Hmong studies are available, there is only one study

regarding the Hmong leadership prototype in California (Saechao-Elizalde, 2014) but none in Minnesota. Recent studies have examined gender differences and bias toward Hmong women, but none incorporated Hmong men's viewpoints (Cha, 2013; Lee & Tapp, 2010). Along with the limited studies on leadership, many current studies are within higher education leadership (Moua & Riggs, 2012; Yang, 2022). Without a proper understanding and thorough study of the growing Hmong population in the United States, it is unclear how cultural variation affects leadership prototypes in the Hmong community in Minnesota from a men's and women's perspective.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine leadership prototypes and cultural variation amongst working professional Hmong men and women in Minnesota. Minnesota was chosen because it contains the largest Hmong population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Leadership prototypes and cultural variation in working Hmong American men and women who live in Minnesota were the central focus of this study. Secondly, this study examined what Hmong Americans in Minnesota look for in their leaders between Hmong men and women. The Hmong have a deep history of favoring strong warlord leaders during their wars with the Chinese (Culas & Michaud, 1997). Also, the traditional Hmong leadership prototype has been male-dominant and clan-based. These clan leaders are typically elders in one of the 18 Hmong clans (Yang, 2003). Vang (2020) stated that Hmong female perspectives are often restricted due to cultural upbringings, so including females in the study reflected both views in the Hmong community. As the Hmong modernized in the United States, cultural variation has impacted the prototype of leadership prototype to fit the American culture (Moua, 2020). Through this qualitative phenomenology approach, I discovered leadership prototypes and cultural variation in working Hmong men and women professionals who reside in Minnesota.

Research Questions

I conducted this qualitative research with a phenomenology approach to understanding professional job-holding Hmong men and women's feelings and attitudes toward traditional Hmong leadership prototypes and how cultural variations have impacted these prototypes. This study included both Hmong men and women participants currently living in Minnesota and working in professional jobs. The age group of these individuals were 28 to 45 years of age. The region in Minnesota that this study covered was the Twin Cities, which includes the Minneapolis and St. Paul suburbs. The following research questions were used in this investigation to gain insight into leadership prototypes and cultural variation for Hmong men and women working professionals in Minnesota:

1. What are the lived experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota?
2. How have Hmong men and women in Minnesota experienced cultural variation?
3. What characteristics do Hmong women and men in Minnesota value in leadership?
4. How have cultural variations affected the values Hmong men and women in Minnesota have about leadership?

Significance of the Research

There was a need for additional research regarding leadership prototypes and cultural variation for Hmong men and women from a leadership perspective in Minnesota. Saechao-Elizalde (2014) studied Hmong leadership and cultural responsibilities in Tulare County, California. Yang (2012) reviewed Hmong leadership and the need for progress, but the scope of this investigation focused more on self-help organizations than leadership. Xiong et al. (2018) suggested that Hmong Americans living in two cultural worlds may have significant cultural differences but do not cover leadership. Kue Khun (2022) wrote about culture and leadership intersecting from a Hmong perspective, but the view is from a Hmong female principal focused on educational leadership. In addition, Moua (2020) wrote regarding transformational leadership from a Hmong perspective, but the location of this study is in Wisconsin. Moua stated in her recommendations for future

research that a geographic area with a higher Hmong population and access to more resources, opportunities, and mentors would be ideal. These implications reveal a gap and need for Hmong leadership study regarding cultural differences in Minnesota and what characteristics the Hmong look for in their leader.

Another justification for this study was the need for current resources available to future scholars. Only two studies regarding Hmong leadership and cultural perception existed during a scholarly search online. One of these studies (Saechao-Elizalde, 2014) focused on Tulare County in California. Another reason for the need for this research was the lack of online articles regarding Hmong leadership. Much information is available in book form, not within the past 10 years. Many studies, such as Tapp (2003), are only available in a physical book. Although some books are available, many are from 2010 (Dunnigan, 1982; Fass & Bui, 1985; Hein, 1994; Moua, 1994). New scholarly research is critical, as leadership prototypes evolve as perceptions and different periods contribute to an individual's mental representation of how their leadership is supposed to look (Ubaka et al., 2020). New resources would contribute to a better understanding of Hmong leadership.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this research study was leadership prototype and cultural variation. A leadership prototype is a perception based on an individual's cognitive representation of how they perceive the characteristics, traits, qualities, and images (Lord et al., 2001). The leadership prototypes used in this study come from implicit leadership theories (ILTs). Implicit leadership theory is a cognitive theory of leadership developed by Robert Lord and colleagues (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). Implicit leadership theory or leader prototype guides an individual's perceptions and responses to leaders. Although many researchers have used this theory widely, cultural variation is one primary influence on implicit leadership theory (Paris et al., 2009).

The second conceptual framework uses Hofstede's cultural dimension. The framework includes power distance, collectivist versus individualism, uncertainty avoidance, femininity versus masculinity, and short-term versus long-term

orientation (Hofstede, 1993). This conceptual framework is used to understand cultural variation. Cultural variation is the widely different cultural and ecological niches (Cohen, 2001). Different cultures worldwide have different cultural norms; as such, good etiquette in one culture may be viewed as unfavorable in another culture (Guglielmino et al., 1995). This framework is critical for the Hmong leadership prototype in Minnesota due to a new culture and environment. An example of a cultural variation change is an individualistic culture that values alone time. At the same time, a collectivist culture will view alone time as isolation and resistance to associating with others (Culpeper et al., 2010). The different environments impact how individuals act, think, and react to situations (Tsai et al., 2006). This framework was chosen because Hmong people migrated from Laos and Thailand, and the culture in Minnesota is different.

Methodology

In research, there are many ways a study can be done. There is qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. This research incorporated a qualitative research design. Qualitative research investigates the participants' lived experiences (Assarroudi et al., 2018). In addition, the qualitative research method provides an understanding of problems and assists in discovering new thoughts and perspectives through analysis of the participant's experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). As part of qualitative research to explore experiences, interviews and discussions are among the approaches to gathering information from the participants (Horsburgh, 2003). During the interviews, it is also essential to observe the participant's body language, posture, gestures, and tone of voice (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Observing the participants allows for a complete understanding of the participants lived experiences and thoughts.

Within the qualitative study, there are six standard qualitative designs. The six qualitative designs are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, historical, case study, and action research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I employed a phenomenological approach to understanding Hmong men and women's lived experiences regarding leadership prototypes and cultural variations. Creswell et al. (2007) stated that phenomenology is the study of phenomena or

affairs of the individual from the first-person point of view. Through participant interviews, phenomenological researchers analyze thoughts, feelings, reflections, and observations of lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Often, phenomenology is used to study how a particular group of similar individuals experience a situation (van Manen, 2017); however, phenomenology looks at the personal experience, not an individual describing someone else's experience (Gallagher, 2012). In addition, phenomenology does not attempt to explain or speak on things; instead, it focuses on how things appear (Neubauer et al., 2019). The phenomenological idea is to inquire and concentrate on experience descriptions instead of worldly objects (Polkinghorne, 1989). This presents a unique opportunity to capture and analyze the experience of participants.

Participants

The participants in this study were all Hmong. There were eight participants total: four Hmong males and four Hmong females. Purposeful sampling was selected for this study due to specific criteria that need to be met. One measure is that these Hmong individuals are working professionals. Working professionals are chosen as the target audience to get perspectives from a more diverse lens. Hmong working professionals held leadership perspectives within an American organization and their Hmong community leadership. These individuals are from the metro area surrounding Minneapolis and St. Paul to narrow it down for the requirements. The age group of these individuals were from 28 years of age to 45 years of age. Moua (2018) wrote that many in the 1990s grew up with parents who still practice traditional Hmong cultures and upbringings. Vang (2013) also stated that the cultural identity of Hmong Americans was progressing towards adaptation. Still, first-generation Hmong students struggled most between the Hmong and American cultures due to split household practices (Lee, 2001). The participants within the required age group were able to describe their experiences with traditional Hmong culture and the cultural variation of the American culture on their Hmong leadership prototype. By using nonrandom sampling, the participants have to meet the prerequisite that pertains to the study to preserve time-saving and sharing experiences that relate to the research questions.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study was done through personal interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) specified that qualitative research reassures individuals to tell their stories and narrows the power relationships between the researcher and participants in a study. Individual interviews allowed participants to express and share their experiences on Hmong leadership prototypes and cultural variation. The interviews were set for 60 minutes and were conducted in person. The interviews were semistructured with open-ended questions, allowing me room to probe and ask additional questions for clarification. Heimann et al. (2020) used a similar approach of semistructured interviews and opened-ended questions to capture leadership style and approach. The results showed that participants could share more, and the interviewer also had opportunities to answer additional questions when needed.

Each participant had one meeting, and follow-up meetings were scheduled as needed to clarify any misunderstanding. The meetings occurred in a secluded area that allowed audio recording and was free of distractions. A Zoom interview was only allowed due to illness or other emergencies. My goal was for the participants to be raw and authentic with their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989). An in-person interview allowed me to observe and look for body language and queues (Frechette et al., 2020). Janz and Mooney (2019) stated that a big exhale of breath and other nonverbal cues during an interview can reveal many things about the person.

Before interviewing, selected participants received an email invitation (see Appendix A) to participate in the study. This email invited participants to accept or decline the request to participate in this study. In the invitation email, a consent form was attached. If participants confirmed partaking in the study, the consent form from Southeastern University (see Appendix B) was required to be completed. The consent form was filled out and signed prior to participating in this study. By completing this form, participants agreed to partake in the study. I communicated with participants to determine an available time for the in-person interview. Once a time was agreed upon, a confirmation email (see Appendix C)

was sent. This confirmation email included the time, date, location, and any directions or information needed for the in-person interview. A text message was also sent to remind the participants of the meeting day. When the session ended, a thank-you email (see Appendix D) was sent to thank the participants for their time. The audio recording was available for the participants to review if needed. This removed any uncertainty or anything the participants may have wanted to avoid being transcribed.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process aims to make sense of and create meanings from the collected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data analysis included transcribing the audio recording verbatim and interpreting the transcription. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that qualitative coding systematically categorizes data into themes and patterns. I conducted open coding as a first stage to break down the qualitative data and create codes to label them with (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Other coding techniques, such as process, in vivo, value, and descriptive coding, were also used. Once the coding process was done, I employed pattern and axial coding to find similarities and relationships between all the codes (Williams & Moser, 2019). All transcription and coding were done using computer software. Any similarities and linkage were noted to understand Hmong men and women's cultural variation and contribution to the leadership prototype.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study focused on the Hmong people in Minnesota. There were four Hmong men and four Hmong women as participants. These participants were selected due to their location, age, gender, and availability for the study. The main focus was on cultural variation and leadership prototypes. The geographic domain was chosen due to the vast population of Hmong people in the United States residing in Minnesota. The sample of the study included individuals who work within the metro area in Minnesota, such as St. Paul and Minneapolis. These individuals hold professional jobs in their respective fields. The age group for participants is between 28 and 45 years of age. As long as participants were Hmong men or women living in Minnesota, they were eligible to participate in this study.

Definition of Terms

The *clan system* refers to the 18 clans within the Hmong people:nYang, Vang, Lee, Xiong, Her, Chang, Cheng, Pha, Lor, Vang, Vue, Fang, Kong, Khang, Thao, Kue, Moua, and Chue.

Cultural variation is differences among individuals who have acquired different behavior due to some form of social learning.

General Vang Pao is a major general in the Royal Lao Army. He then became the General of the Secret Army during the Vietnam War when the Central Intelligence Agency came and recruited the Hmong to fight alongside the United States.

Hmong American describes the Asian ethnic group of Hmong descent that lives in the United States.

Miao is a Chinese term to describe the Hmong people living in China, specifically in Southern China and Southwestern China in Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangxi, and Yunnan.

Leadership prototype is a cognitive representation of an actual or abstract leader who is thought to possess features shared by most leaders who exemplify that construct.

New Hmong generation refers to the Hmong people raised with the American culture in the United States.

Older Hmong generation refers to anyone born and raised in Laos and Thailand that migrated to the United States as a refugee.

A *refugee camp* is a temporary camp built by the United Nations in Thailand to provide safety and protection for Hmong before resettlement in the United States.

Southeast Asian are people from different countries such as Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

The *Secret War* started in the early 1960s, when the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began recruiting, training, and leading the indigenous

Hmong people in Laos to fight against North Vietnamese Army intruders in Laos during the Vietnam War.

  Traditional values refers to Hmong conservative beliefs pre-America

  Hofstede's cultural dimension is a framework for a cross-cultural view of different cultures across countries. The six key dimensions include power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and short versus long-term orientation.

  Nai Ban is a civilian political leader.

Summary

  Through this study, I sought to understand the experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota regarding their leadership prototype and culture. As the Hmong moved from one location to another, their culture and situation changed (Yang, 2001). The location of the Hmong created a new culture within the Hmong community in Minnesota. It has also made different views on how individuals view leadership and their model image of a leader (Lor & Yang, 2012). The result of this study may aid and contribute to the understanding and realization of the leadership style that the Hmong people are looking for in their next leader. I sought to understand the experience, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and reactions to the cultural variation and leadership prototype for Hmong men and women in Minnesota. In the next chapter, I review the history and culture of leadership prototypes, cultural variation, and the Hmong people.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Leadership prototype and cultural variation has existed since civilization began. Nguyen and Truong (2016) stated that community influence plays a vital role in shaping the perception of what is expected in a society. To understand what an individual looks for in a leader, Harkiolakis et al. (2017) stated that leadership prototypes need to look backward to move forward, as the past delineates future leaders. A thorough literature review of leadership prototypes is critical to understanding the ideal leadership for Hmong individuals. As this study focused on Hmong Minnesota men and women, understanding the Hmong people and their history of arriving in the United States assisted me in understanding the perception of their leadership prototype. Hmong leadership prototype and cultural variation is the central aspect of this study. Discussing and exploring the different cultural impacts on Hmong leaders in the United States is essential. This chapter contains a review of leadership prototypes, cultural variation, and the history of Hmong American leadership.

Leadership Prototype

People believe certain traits are associated with individuals in a particular position, status, gender, or community (Eagly & Kite, 1987). Females often associate traits such as kind, gentle, warming, loving, tender, and soft-spoken (Fiske & Stevens, 1993). In contrast, aggressive, brave, warrior, military-minded, and loud traits are often associated with males. These communal traits are perceived and controlled by external factors based on expectations (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Similar to the expectations for gender, there are also expectations for leaders. These expectations for characteristics of leaders should have been known as leader prototypes (Lord et al., 1984). A leadership prototype is an individual's cognitive representation and expectation of attributes that a leader should have (Foti et al., 1982).

The cognitive schema of leaders comes from many different influences. Mun et al. (2021) stated that young students label what they look for in leaders based on their parent's expectations. As these students progress and grow, they

start to form their expectations of their leader, different from their parent's expectations of their leader. Auerbach (2010) wrote that students with a positive partnership and good relationship with their parents share the exact expectations. Auerbach also stated that parents' involvement goes beyond bake sales at school as they shape their child's perceptions. This connection of developing a leadership prototype based on the environment reflects Rosch (1983), stating that cognitive schemas develop through time and experience. The influence of growth and expertise helps shape the leadership prototype.

Leadership prototypes can change contingent on a combination of influences. Social-cognitive psychologist E.R. Smith argued that perception is not a stagnant entity but constantly evolving (George, 1990). Perception may change due to experiencing a new environment, group histories, social interactions, and trauma or success (Hall & Lord, 1998). As time changes, however, it is unavoidable to have perceptions remain constant. The flexibility to acclimate and grow a new cognitive perspective on leadership depends on a positive or negative experience with confident leaders (Xiao et al., 2020). Regarding employees' perception of leadership, an individual's leadership prototype changed the employees' proactive behavior after interacting with a positive leader (Wayne et al., 2002). The positive interaction transformed the perception of many employees regardless of their previous perceptions.

Leadership prototype has become heavily researched recently. No theoretical framework explains how followers integrate all perceptions and elements into one leadership style (Haslam et al., 2022). De Araujo (2015) indicated that the growing study on leadership prototypes redirects back to implicit leadership theory about leadership attributes and individual perception. Although there is no specific theoretical framework regarding leadership prototypes, two critical aspects of leadership prototypes involve implicit leadership theory and categorization theory (Bruner & Tagiuri, 1954; Epitropaki et al., 2013; Foti et al., 2017). Implicit leadership theory is the implicit conceptualization that an individual hold of leaders that represent the schemas, traits, and attributes of their expected leaders (Offermann & Coats, 2018). Categorization theory insinuates that

individuals use categorizations or schemas to identify what and who their leaders are (Rosch, 1978). Implicit leadership theory and categorization leadership theory helped scholars better understand the growing research in leadership prototypes.

The growth of the leadership prototype also includes diversity and inclusion. When looking at inclusion, the leadership prototype expands due to looking outside of an individual and now considering social identity and group identification (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Begeny et al. (2022) studied how individuals apply social identity principles to perceive their leadership prototypes. By looking at the group's social identity, the observer's perspective help identifies targets (Steffens et al., 2020). These targets are members perceived by others as leaders who have internalized the group's identities. These targets become valued and seen as role-model in the eyes of group members, making their actions and characteristics the standard (Hoffmann et al., 2020). Additionally, when an individual can associate their leadership prototype with group identification, it expands the individual's perception of new prototypes (Blader & Chen, 2014).

Implicit Leadership Theory

Implicit leadership theory was first proposed by Robert Lord and his colleagues and founded on the concepts of individuals having cognitive representations of the world and using that representation to interpret their surroundings and control their behaviors (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). The mental representations are applied to leaders, and a cognitive model of an ideal leader is created based on the viewer's needs (Halpin & Winer, 1957). These needs are elements that individuals associate with what they want in a leader and the environment (Wang et al., 2022). Epitropaki and Martin (2005) wrote that individuals envision their ideal work environment and associate it with the leader who fits their needs. For many, their implicit values for a leader are someone who supports their growth and creates a suitable work environment (Khorakian & Sharifirad, 2019). These ideal work environments and leadership needs do not derive from accidents. These four needs and requirements developed over time and through experiences.

Implicit leadership focuses on the experience that individuals go through to create their leadership prototypes. Lord et al. (1984) advanced implicit leadership theory and stated that individuals shape their leadership prototype based on leaders who match their style and provide a positive experience. Lord et al. wrote that when individuals experience a cheerful involvement with a specific type of leader, that leader's characteristics become ideal for the situation if it arises again. Epitropaki and Martin (2005) stated that individuals perceive prototype characteristics as matching their cognitive structure of leadership. If an individual experiences a negative involvement with a leader, that leader becomes the ideal leader to avoid a situation (Rush & Russell, 1988). Implicit leadership is the idea that individuals create their leaders, but that idea is shaped through experience.

In addition to experience, individuals have mental concepts of whom they want as a leader based on effectiveness. Junker and van Dick (2014) stated that prototypes are benchmarks to specify what people expect from their idealized leader. For instance, Sy et al. (2010) wrote that a more technical leader who can get the job done would be viewed more likely as a leader than an ineffective leader. These implicit conceptualizations of leaders also come from satisfaction (Connor & Evers, 2020). Followers who are more satisfied with the effectiveness will associate with leaders positively. Anderson (2014) described the association of implicit leadership theory and its effectiveness as cognitive algebra, where a leader's traits receive distinct weights depending on practical relevance. This weight is then calculated to determine whether it fits into the follower's mental leadership prototype (Sharifirad & Hajhoseiny, 2018). The point system is a measure of effectiveness and satisfaction. A leader's effectiveness contributes to the mental concept of the leadership prototype.

Not all influential leaders are treated equally, as some individuals have a limited mental selection of whom they perceive as ideal leaders. Paris et al. (2009) wrote that some individuals had been molded to view only specific individuals as leaders. Obenauer and Kalsher (2022) studied leadership regarding race and found that White leaders were evaluated more favorably than non-White leaders regarding credit for successful organizational performance. White coworkers' cognitive

perception of White leaders is reflected in what followers are familiar with and what they accept (White, 2012). Scott and Brown (2006) demonstrated that different perceptions of leadership arise from the different encoding of the leader's behavior. These perceptions are encoded into individuals to view leadership characteristics in a certain way. Participants found it challenging to move labels and stigmas, as it is easier and more accessible to go with what is known instead of challenging the norm (Scott & Brown, 2006). Biased mental selection changes once the stigma and labels are removed from an individual's perception (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010). The unfair treatment of leaders based on individual perception shows a personal bias.

One limitation of implicit leadership theory is the lack of acknowledgment or discount to individuals who do not fit the ideal leadership prototype based on unfamiliarity (Tavares et al., 2018). The limitation mentioned by Brachle (2020) stated that implicit leadership theory works if there is equal representation; however, an underrepresented group is routinely discounted because of a lack of comprehension (Rhee & Sigler, 2015). For instance, Kono et al. (2012) researched implicit leadership theories in Japan and the United States and found that participants based their ideal leadership prototype on familiarity and availability. Leaders with unique characteristics typically are not seen as leaders and are judged differently (Du et al., 2020). Yan and Hunt (2005) recognized that implicit is based on what one understands, and it is impossible to understand what one does not recognize. Mahon (2017) agreed that a leader prototype based on implicit characteristics inhibits influential leaders from leading due to bias not matching the leader prototype. In another study, Swanson et al. (2020) examined women entering the sport management field. It shows a lack of acknowledgment and unfamiliarity, making it challenging to allow women a chance to be leaders in the industry. Leadership perceptions that are not acknowledged because it is not embedded can be an issue for Hmong leadership as the Hmong are recent immigrants to the United States. Often, implicit leadership theory only allows individuals to recognize leaders based on embedded principles.

A recent study of implicit leadership theory focused on the dimension of the prototype from a follower's standpoint. Junker and van Dick (2014) explained that leadership prototypes owned by an individual would influence their process and behavior. Follower perception also plays into implicit leadership, as followers who see leaders that fit their prototype would be more satisfied working under them (Wilson et al., 2020). Villamor (2022) researched virtual work and implicit leadership theories on how followers are less biased when it is not face-to-face. Villamor stated that the virtual study helped advance implicit leadership theory by associating new characteristics of leaders, and adaptiveness is one of the new characteristics. Bongiorno et al. (2021) wrote that adaptiveness shows the implicit values of leaders that consider followers' needs. Similar to Villamor (2022), Wilson et al. (2020) contributed and studied implicit leadership theory in addition to prototypes. Future leaders are adaptive because followers do not perceive people as their leaders if they lack dedication to acknowledging followers' needs (Wilson et al., 2020). The recent study of implicit leadership theory reverses the lens from looking at leaders to including followers' perspectives.

Categorization Leadership Theory

Apart from implicit recognition of leadership, Schyns and Schilling (2011) wrote that individuals identify characteristics of their leadership prototypes by grouping leaders into categories. Lord et al. (1984) grew implicit leadership theory research by using categorization theory principles to recommend the existence of a leadership prototype. Followers cognitively create categorizations for leaders and use a mental process to associate leaders with their behavior and prototypic attributes (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Followers use this categorization to identify who is a leader and who is not a leader based on their evaluation (Sewell et al., 2022). The framework of a cognitively represented leader prototype must fall within mental categories developed by the individual (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2014). Then, individuals pull from their mental categories of leadership and associate that with a person to determine whether they are a leader—and, if so, what type of leader (Van Quaquebeke & van Knippenberg, 2012). A recent study by Petsko and Rosette (2022) showed that White is, by default, still the leading

categorization regarding promotion as others use their categories to identify who fits their mental leadership model. Over time, the leadership categories evolve into a standard example of a typical leader category known as a leadership prototype (Rosette et al., 2008).

When using categorization leadership theory to identify leaders, a hierarchically structured categorization utilizes vertical and horizontal dimensions and distinctions (Lord et al., 1984). On the vertical scale, leadership categories include three levels superordinate, basic, and subordinate levels of categorization. On the horizontal scale, distinctions are made. The distinctions on the horizontal scale include leaders or nonleaders on the superordinate level. On the basic level, the categorization consists of political, military, religious, and business. The subordinate gets more precise and categorizes the leader as Army Major or head football coach. At the superordinate level, attributes and characterization overlap at a minimum with those of the contrasting category of nonleader. The superordinate level is inclusive in terms of assisting in distinguishing who is a leader and who is a nonleader. Although categorization leadership theory has helped the leadership prototype, limitations and more research are needed.

Despite the significant contribution of categorization leadership theory to the leadership prototype, some limitations exist. Categorization leadership theory stems from individuals' mental representations of leaders based on what the individual knows (Lord & Hall, 2003); however, cognitive processing may be slow as extensive experience with a particular type of leader is absent (Coyle & Foti, 2015). This nonexperience delays the processing of categorizing the prototypical leader's traits into categories. This nonexperience often creates confusion in the individual's leadership prototype. It would require massive storage of mental categories to provide flexibility in perceiving leadership across multiple situations (Shondrick et al., 2010). Researchers have shown that leadership prototypes expand across many cultures, organizations, and locations (Dickson et al., 2012). The time it takes for the individual to activate a two-stage matching process of the target person compared to a leadership prototype is part of the limitation.

Another leadership prototype effect under categorization leadership theory is the connectionist leadership model. Due to the limitations of the leadership category theory, Lord et al. (2001) redeveloped the theory as the connectionist model of leadership. The connectionist leadership model is a mental network processor that continually integrates information from stored input sources and passes it to an output unit (Hogue & Lord, 2007). Due to leadership categorization theory being derived from a symbolic-level view of leadership from an individual's mental conceptualization of leadership prototypes stored as distinct long-term memory, using the categorization takes ample time (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996). Instead of categorizing leadership traits, the connectionist leadership model uses a stored mental network of generations of leadership perceptions abstracted from race, gender, culture, and experience (Johnson et al., 2008). Instead of using fixed categories, the new reformulation in the connectionist leadership model allows flexibility in leadership prototypes by adjusting to guide prototype reconstruction (Lord et al., 2001). With leadership categorization theory, a leader with qualifying categories may be overlooked due to the individual not processing correctly. In contrast, the connectionist leadership model allows flexibility to create a new leadership prototype to view this individual as a leader. The connectionist model of leadership, along with the continuing development of the leadership prototype, provides a more robust basis understanding of leadership perception beyond that of leadership categorization (Sy et al., 2010).

Although leadership prototype is growing in academics, much work is left to be done to understand how individuals create a cognitive schema of their ideal leaders. Implicit leadership theory contributes to the leadership prototype by proposing that individuals generate personal assumptions about the traits that characterize their leaders (Schyns et al., 2020). Categorization leadership theory, based on these personal assumptions about features and individual characteristics, is then put into categories. These categories are then used with a mental processing system to associate individuals with specific categories to see if they are a leader or not (Lord et al., 2001). Implicit and categorization leadership theories have limitations, however, and need additional research. One thing in common is that

both approaches associate leadership prototypes with culture, experience, and location (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Lindheim, 2020; Robert, 1982). The many factors contributing to an individual's leadership prototype can be better understood by understanding how these perceptions came initially.

Cultural Variation

Leaders hold a collection of traits and characteristics that stand out from the rest of society (Day et al., 2004). Ancestral and nomadic groups based their leadership perceptions on those more advanced in foraging, hunting, labor, and defensive tactics (Van Vugt et al., 2008). Followers set leaders' perceptions according to needs and expectations (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). Regarding expectations, when followers change their mindset and goals, a need for new leaders occurs. Xie (2009) stated that when an individual envisions their leadership prototype in Western countries, the focus is on their leadership formation, structure, measure, and application. In Asian countries, the leadership prototype focuses more on collectivism, group identity, decision-making, and task orientation, but is also people-oriented (Swierczek, 1991). Due to different cultures and environments, an alteration of assumptions in an individual's cognitive representation of leadership occurs.

The wide range of definitions for culture makes it challenging to identify what culture may mean to a different part of the world. Harris (1968) defined culture as the system that links people to their current environment. A group's culture may consist of shared language, symbols, daily patterns, and standard of life (Geertz, 1965). Although many groups have similarities, Paris et al. (2009) stated that culture is hard to explain as it continuously shifts depending on other variables. Hofstede (1984) termed culture as the communal mental programming of groups in an environment and how the group responds to events and change. The constant change leads to cultural variation as cultural behavior and patterns adapt to fit the group's needs (Čeněk et al., 2020). Cultural variation refers to the constant change and differences in human behavior and development that different cultures exhibit worldwide (Cohen, 2001). Although the term has different variations, it is apparent that there are variations in culture across the globe.

Although cultural variations may differ in different parts of the world, the definition remains constant. Boyd and Richerson (2005) defined cultural variation as "differences among individuals that exist because they have acquired different behaviors as a result of some form of social learning" (p. 53). Cultures are variations of the environment that individuals inhabit, and the diversity of culture in the world is produced based on individual interpretations (Cohen, 2001). Another definition from Barth (2010) is that cultural variation is an aggregation of various cultures in one environment. People share a common culture with intersecting differences to distinguish the discrete culture from all others (Barth, 2010); however, it is not to be confused with cultural differences. Cultural differences refer to the unique distinctions in various beliefs, behaviors, languages, practices, and expressions of a specific ethnicity, race, or national origin (Lim, 2016). Yang (2018) stated that cultural differences show unique disparities in values and beliefs, such as how the East and West interpret Mulan, the well-known Chinese legend. The difference in cultural variation is not distinguishing dissimilarity but, instead, the mixture and combination of positive and favorable perceived cultural aspects (Miyamoto et al., 2017). For a cultural variation to happen, there must first be a mix of cultures. Afterward, based on how an individual acquired the differences, they create a variation based on their learning and understanding of the present culture.

Cultural Variation at Group the Group Level

Cultural variation is both an individual and group phenomenon. At the group level, Leung and Cohen (2011) compared helpful, honest, and "most likely to behave with integrity" types of people in one culture, and they found that the same type of person is least likely to help in another culture. A group's normative behavior is only normal until a situation changes and the group adapts to the new environment (Kaslow et al., 1998). As time progresses, an evolutionary approach creates new norms, behavior patterns, and standards for the group of people (Aktas et al., 2016). Van Vugt and von Rueden (2020) stated that evolutionary perspectives are components of cultural variation in leadership. As the group develops, they construct new perspectives on culture and give new meanings to

what leadership means (Dickson et al., 2003). Historically, leadership involves group members following the most dominant person, typically a male, who can provide safety and food (Overdorff et al., 2005). Koveshnikov and Ehrnrooth (2018) stated, however, that cultural variation has moved on from one dominant male leading, including influence, individualized consideration, and transformational work. Although cultural variation constantly changes at the group level, a new norm is formed for the collective group.

Regarding cultural norms for groups, there are four dimensions widely researched and developed by Hofstede (1980). The four cultural dimensions are uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity (gender roles), individualism versus collectivism, and power distance (Hofstede, 1980). Uncertainty avoidance refers to individuals comfortable with ambiguity (Hofstede, 1993). Masculinity and femininity are the distribution of roles between men and women in culture (Helgeson, 1994). Individualism regards individuals who only look after themselves. A collectivist society includes individuals integrated into a stout, interconnected group that acts in the group's best interest (Wagner & Moch, 1986). Power distance looks at power distribution between a member of society and leadership (Hofstede, 1980). The significance of Hofstede's cultural dimension is how translatable to all cultures globally (Au, 1999). The four dimensions look at overall group behaviors and values.

Regarding group behaviors and values, Paramova and Blumberg (2017) mentioned cultural value variances across the cultures of Bulgaria and Russia. In the study, Bulgarian scored higher regarding power distance and promoting authoritarianism, obedience toward leaders, and a steep hierarchy (Paramova & Blumberg, 2017). The same study revealed that Russia prefers a lower power distance and promotes a collectivist attitude by diffusion of responsibility and delegating decision-making. Minkov (2011) stated that cultural values could help promote or change the cultural dimension due to different cultural norms and standards. In a study examining 22 European countries regarding the cultural variation of leadership prototypes, the author posited that they all have similarities. Still, the results supported the assumption that leadership concepts are culturally

endorsed (Brodbeck et al., 2000). For example, individualistic culture has a dimension of autonomy and self-orientation, possibly from weak family ties and positive enforcement towards competition (Hofstede, 1993). Inglehart (1997) was the first to document the massive shift in cultural orientation regarding Western democracies, which significantly influences individualistic culture. Cultural variation includes rich, diverse social practices, and different cultures have different variations and preferences.

In addition to the dimensions, cultural variation influence language, traditions, gender roles, values, and beliefs. Recent research on cultural variations and emotional expressions across five cultures found variations of expressed behavior shaped by cultural resemblance in values (Cordaro et al., 2018). Both agreed that culture is shaped by values and endorsed. However, Coppens and Rogoff (2021) described cultural variation as occurring early in development and stated that these cultural values are introduced early. Mesoudi (2018) studied the migration and acculturation of these values taught early on and how moving can contribute to cultural variation. Mesoudi stated again that genetics minimally affects cultural variations and that cultural evolution is more significant due to adapting to a new society and cultural values. Another study examined whether a crook's value will remain constant in a new environment abroad and found that depending on the environment, the thief may assimilate and break out of the delinquent traits (Dimant et al., 2015). Cultural variation influences behavior, attitude, and personality and can cause assimilation and adaptation, often to fit into the new culture.

Cultural variation differs by region, environment, and other factors that affect human patterns. Western and Asian cultures have different sleeping patterns because an independent bed is standard for newborns in western culture, and co-sleeping is the norm in Asian culture (Ahn et al., 2021). Although it is just a simple routine such as sleep, the preference for sleeping patterns and behavior differs between cultures. Another example of differences in the way is the choice of words and emotional expressions (Jackson et al., 2019). More recent work indicated that labeling emotional expressions and words might be a possible cultural variation in

interpretation due to cultural contexts and meanings, depending on what is acceptable and not acceptable within the culture (Chen & Jack, 2017). These acceptable and unacceptable patterns vary by culture that is affected by various factors (Ma-Kellams, 2020). Gavrilets (2021) stated that these daily human patterns create norms shaped by external factors such as cultural, religious, political, and organizational pressure. Standards in one culture may be looked at differently depending on human patterns and cultural acceptance.

Cultural Variation at the Individual Level

Although cultural variation is a group and individual phenomenon, there may be variations and differences between individuals in a specific cultural group. Individuals may have their self-concept on how to select, interpret, and evaluate incidents based on self-worth (Leonard et al., 2009). Leung and Cohen (2011) stated that there are two incontestable facts regarding cultural variation. These two facts are that there are differences between people of different cultures, and within that culture, individuals can vary widely from each other too. A study by Leung and Cohen (2011) regarding cultural variation in honor, dignity, and face showed that Culture X might predict behavior in an individual who is a part of Culture X. Some individuals in Culture X may behave differently in Culture Y because of the variation in experiences with Culture X. Rousseau (1998) stated that individuals who fail to interpret situations according to the group's cultural variation are a disruption. Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) argued that individuals within the same culture could think independently and stray far from cultural values; however, because cultural variation is the differences amongst individuals and their acquired behaviors resulting from social learning, individuals will have perceptions and interpretations that may differ from the group.

To help explain the cultural variation at the individual level, an understanding of experiences is required. Individuals with a positive experience are more likely to identify with the culture (Miyamoto et al., 2017). Hook et al. (2013) stated that when a positive experience occurs, individuals acquire a different interpretation and incorporate the values and beliefs from that culture into their own culture. Moon et al. (2017) examined cultural variation in individuals' responses to

perpetrators by ranking perpetrators from high or low and categorizing into acceptable or unacceptable. These individuals are all from the same Korean culture. Still, the variation in the rankings showed that individuals who may have positive encounters with perpetrators ranked them more positively, and individuals with negative experiences ranked them higher. Although all the participants are from the same Korean culture, individual experiences and perceptions may differ from others who also identify with the same culture but had a negative experience.

Cultural variation at the individual level focuses on four main individual-level variables. Kim (2004) stated that individual-level variables include perception, individual decision-making, learning, and motivation. Cohen et al. (2015) recommended these four individual-level variables as independent variables of individuals whose behavior may not reflect the larger culture. In a study that investigated individual and cultural variations, the findings indicated that individual variations were more significant than cultural variations in preferences for direct communication style (Park et al., 2012). Park et al. stated that within the same culture, there exist significant individual variables because not all people from the same culture react identically. In addition, within-culture socialization is rarely uniform, and the personalities of people in the culture ensure that the effects of culture on individuals would not be the same (Taras et al., 2010). A proposed solution suggested that cultural variation needs to disregard how individuals behave and react and instead look at the process that governs human responses (Park et al., 2012). This shows that cultural variation at the individual level is more regarding how individuals process and acquire different behaviors from other cultures to make their own decision.

For individuals to have variation in cultural perspective, they must extract this perspective from another cultural group, usually the dominant culture. Again, cultural variation is individual differences due to the unique experiences and behavior learned from social interaction (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). There is usually a more dominant culture in environments with different kinds of people (Kolind, 2011). The dominant culture is the culture that holds the most power and is most influential (Clarke et al., 2017). For example, the dominant culture in the

United States is that of White, middle-class, Protestant people of northern European descent (Kivel, 2017). The dominant culture usually sets behaviors and norms for the environment to adhere to, but they do not always rule (Spring, 2016). Although the dominant culture is the majority, other cultures are present within the dominant culture too.

In addition to the dominant culture, there are also subcultures. Subcultures are the distinction between nonnormative and marginal groups in society (Williams, 2011). Gelder (2005) stated that subculture is not indicative of location but is based more on behaviors and values. A subculture is a cultural group that lives within the larger culture, often sharing beliefs and interests at a variance of the dominant culture (Yinger, 1960). In each dominant culture, several subcultures may exist (Robertson et al., 2012). In Latin America, Han (2017) stated that pop culture is mainstream. Some subcultures, however, internalize mainstream cultural materials into their identity, creating a new subculture. One of the examples Han (2017) provided is Korean pop culture, known as K-pop in Latin America. K-pop subculture mirrors many Latin American mainstream pop culture values but has a unique style, choreography, and song lyrics (Han, 2017). Although the dominant culture has influenced and shared beliefs in the subculture, subcultures exist because they have their own identity and features that vary from the dominant culture. Individuals can be in both the dominant and subculture.

Overall, cultural variation may look different in different parts of the world, but the impact stays consistent. Individuals have different behaviors due to social learning from other cultures (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). These variations may be from a culture the individual is a part of, or they can be experienced from the mixture of the two cultures (Ungar, 2013). These experiences, however, can alter the individual based on positive or negative experiences. Experiences can come from the dominant culture or the subculture. Cultural variation can affect both the group and individual levels. For the current research, cultural variation was regarded from an individual level to see how Hmong working professionals have changed with their experiences living in multiple cultures in Minnesota and how it may influence their leadership prototype.

The Hmong

The history of the Hmong is unclear and often undocumented. Quincy (1988) suggested that the Hmong first called Central Siberia home before they journeyed to Northern China around 2500 B.C. From Siberia, Quincy (1995) stated that the Hmong likely migrated into China and occupied the Yellow River valley around 3000 B.C. in Henan, even before the Chinese. Although there is no detailed history of the Hmong origin, it is documented that the Hmong spent many centuries in China (Lee, 2015). As a small ethnic minority group, the Hmong migrated from China to Laos after years of continuous war with the Chinese government (Lee, 2015). Before coming to the United States, the Hmong were involved with the Central Intelligence Agency in the Vietnam War, serving as the ground team to recover American pilots who were shot down behind enemy lines (Quincy, 2012). Due to the fallout of the Vietnam War in 1973, the Hmong came to the United States as refugees. (Vang, 2003). Currently, larger populations of Hmong Americans reside in California, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Minnesota (Vagh et al., 2018). In 2017, a survey revealed that there are more than 300,000 Hmong in the United States, with most Hmong refugees living in Minnesota (Lee & Vang, 2010). To many Hmong people, the United States is their new home and a chance to rewrite history.

Traditional Hmong Leadership

Hmong culture emphasizes the importance of relationships between relatives, clan members, elders, and strong family ties. Typically, the traditional Hmong family includes the husband, wife, children, and grandparents (Bjelica & Nauser, 2018). It is common for Hmong households to be multigenerational, with grandparents living under the same roof. The husband is generally the leader of a Hmong family. The men of the house usually decide on family matters (Carroll, 2021). If more significant problems arise, the men communicate any concerns or issues to their clan leader and other community members. On the other hand, women typically take care of the family and house chores (Yang, 1997). The traditional Hmong household has many roles, but defined roles such as leaders and followers are clear.

Traditional Hmong leadership involves only men. While some Hmong women may have a role in traditional Hmong leadership, the significant decisions are made by men (Lor & Yang, 2012). Historically, the Hmong community leadership structures are created and centered around Hmong men and their needs (Lor et al., 2017). Traditional Hmong leadership constructed unfair opportunities, such as limiting girls' access to higher education or becoming a leader (Min & Kim, 2002). Many Hmong leaders still embrace traditional Hmong values, which prevents them from adapting to include women in the leadership circle (Tatman, 2004). The unfair treatment between Hmong males and females has created hardship in America using traditional Hmong leadership.

The Clan System

The Hmong people are split into different clans and use this as a governing system. The clan system is a traditional system that the Hmong have used for centuries to help establish rules, regulations, communication, decision-making, and identity (Vang & Flores, 1999). Within a clan, there are clan leaders—typically elders who are well respected by other clans (Tatman, 2004). The clan system is grounded on the 18 Hmong last names (Moua, 2001). Individuals who share the same clan's last name are believed to originate from one extended family (Tatman, 2004). As a clan member, there are certain restrictions that one must follow, such as no marriage between two individuals from the same clan (Moua, 2003). Clan leaders also try to keep disagreements within the clan and resolve their issues (Vagh et al., 2018). More significant problems that involve two or more clans get escalated to the Nai Ban or village leader (Xiong, 2010). In the United States, however, the clan system is becoming obsolete for American professionals handling the new Hmong generation's issues (Franzen-Castle & Smith, 2012).

Hmong leadership starts within the family and progresses to being a clan leader (Resminingayu, 2018). The clan leaders are at the top of the governance chain, and under them are the clan leader at the national level, clan leader at the village level, subclan leaders, group leaders, and then family leaders (Vang & Hein, 2015). The clan leaders handle all issues, including political and social issues, cultural funerals, and weddings (Vang & Hein, 2015). Their direct family leaders

resolve minor problems at the family level. The clan system has been utilized since the existence of the Hmong people, but recent relocation to the United States has created challenges in maintaining the clan system (Allen et al., 2004). American culture has created many other options for leadership besides being a clan leader, and the responsibilities are altered.

Hmong Leadership in American Culture

With no official Hmong leader currently in the United States, the leadership prototype for the Hmong people is unclear. General Vang Pao is the last officially recognized Hmong leader (Yang, 2012). Saechao-Elizalde (2014) wrote that Hmong leadership and leadership views may have changed since arriving in the United States. In addition, the American culture created new roles for Hmong women and men (DePouw, 2012). Hmong women are now more accepted to hold leadership positions outside their homes (Yang, 2014). The discernment that a Hmong leader needs to be a resilient male figure is shifting to adapt to the American culture (Lee, 2005). The leadership prototype is slowly transitioning as the Hmong assimilate into the American culture.

Hmong American leadership has changed considerably since the 1990s. The period from 1992 to 1999 is characterized as the turning point in Hmong American history regarding transitioning from being refugees to becoming citizens of the United States (Yang, 2013). A part of the continuous success of Hmong Americans is the expansion of opportunities for Hmong women. Lee (1997) stated that over one third of Hmong with bachelor's degrees were women, and over half of those with master's degrees were women. Hmong Americans broke barriers when Choua Lee took the office of trustee on the Board of Education of the St. Paul Public Schools to become the first Hmong to be elected and hold political office (Vang, 2021). Yoshikawa (2006) stated that the Hmong were becoming comfortable in the United States, thriving and impacting their communities. This growth and turning point in Hmong American leadership during the 1990s facilitated the pioneering of new Hmong leadership.

Although there was growth for Hmong leadership in the United States, they coexisted with adversities. Donnelly (1997) stated that Hmong men often feel

disarranged in America due to the lack of leadership powers and decision-making but also said that Hmong women prefer life in the United States due to greater gender equality. Yang (2001) mentioned that there was a scattering policy put in place, which only allowed specific numbers of Hmong family members to immigrate to the United States. This created struggles for Hmong leadership as the Hmong practice a collectivistic culture residing with their clan and families, depending on each other (Yang, 2001). Grubb and Bouffard (2014) added that the separation of the scattering policy created isolation amongst the Hmong and resulted in resistance to adapting to their new home. In addition, Hmong leaders tend to use a more collaborative effort when decision-making, compared to the American culture, where autonomy and individuality are centered (Xiong et al., 2005). Although there are many adversities and changes, Hmong leadership in America is acclimating to the American culture.

General Vang Pao Era

The most recently recognized Hmong leader is General Vang Pao. The United States Central Intelligence Agency recruited General Vang Pao in 1961 as the Hmong leader during the Vietnam War to help the U.S. (Lor & Yang, 2012). General Vang Pao was selected based on his military experience and ranking (Vang & Hein, 2015). Although General Vang Pao was stern and military-minded, he was also kind, social, and a man of his word (Lor & Yang, 2012). General Vang Pao's leadership took place in an era when Yang Dao (1993) wrote that Hmong leadership fundamentals were shifting to a more transformational approach. Vang Pao's leadership also started transitioning to include women and evolving the Hmong leadership into a modernized government mirroring the Lao government (Hillmer, 2015). The vision of General Vang Pao for the Hmong people is to drive them out of the mountain of Laos as farmers and into modern civilization, where Hmong men and women could thrive (Hickman, 2021). In 1974, when the United States withdrew from the Vietnam War, General Vang Pao had the opportunity to flee Laos and take the Hmong people with him (McCall, 1999).

After the Hmong immigrated to the United States, General Vang Pao's leadership continued. General Vang Pao and the Hmong in America tried

associating traditional values with the 21st-century leadership approach (Xiong, 2015). As Hmong leadership under General Vang Pao attempted to assimilate, Thompson (2020) documented that the American culture changed many components of how the Hmong view leadership while battling issues with cultural differences. Hmong leadership began implementing new programs, incorporating business skills, education, job training, and understanding significant differences across generations and sexes (Lee & Tapp, 2010). Although General Vang Pao moved to the United States, one of his main focuses for leadership remains consistently advocating diplomatic measures to stop ongoing human rights violations by the communist government of Laos against the Hmong people (Hillmer, 2011). General Vang Pao's leadership ended in 2011 when he died (Lor & Yang, 2012). The death of General Vang Pao signals the end of his leadership era and the beginning of a new leadership opportunity for the Hmong in the United States.

Hmong Cultural Challenges in America

After the Vietnam War, when the Hmong immigrated to the United States, Hmong Americans experienced many challenges. Yang (2003) stated that some difficulties for the Hmong included family dynamics, cultural differences between generations, cultural adaptation, poverty, education, employment, and language. Another research stated that many challenges are attributed to facing new cultural norms and being in a new country (Yang, 2013). In addition, Cobb (2010) stated that these hardships caused slow acclimatization for refugees to grow and prosper in their new country. These challenges produce stress, tension, and nervousness for many new Hmong Americans (Timm, 1994). These challenges and experiences also create new leadership prototypes for the Hmong people.

Another cultural challenge in America for the Hmong is education. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hmong Americans in higher education have been slowly increasing, but still at a much lower rate than other Southeast Asians (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). One of the reasons for the lack of Hmong in higher education is academic deficiency and lack of parental support through K–12 and college (Huster, 2012; Xiong, 2012). The lack of support for education may be due

to Hmong parents not knowing how to be instructive and helpful in the American culture (Lee et al., 2009). Vue (2019) stated that the trauma from the Vietnam War impacted the education of Hmong American students as most parents are still in survival mode from the war. During one of the interviews, a student indicated that their parents do not express their emotions. Instead, they silence their fear and shame to protect the children from feeling their trauma (Vue, 2019). Due to the new American culture, Hmong students have a lower education rate than other Southeast Asian groups and lack support in obtaining higher education because of cultural challenges.

Language Barrier

In addition to cultural differences, there was also a language barrier. The language barrier was the most significant barrier for Hmong Americans as they settled in the United States (Cobb, 2010). According to Neiman (2019), there are two components to a language barrier. One component of the language barrier is the means to communicate; the second is not fully comprehending (Neiman, 2019). Unfortunately, the Hmong experienced both components of language barriers in the United States. Lee and Vang (2010) wrote that the Hmong have a low English literacy rate and need help understanding the English language thoroughly. Some consequences of the language barriers are lack of healthcare accessibility, slower assimilation into the American culture, and lack of confidence to communicate in English (Kue et al., 2014). The lack of funding and resources for Hmong refugees increased the language barrier (Margaret et al., 2004). The present language barrier created many obstacles for the Hmong in America.

Another difficulty for the Hmong is the lack of a formal written language in their native language. Vagh et al. (2018) reported that the Hmong had no formal written language until the 1950s. Vagh et al. also explained that history was verbally passed down from one generation to another. The lack of formal written language also leads to a lack of structure and formality (Bosher, 1997). When verbally passing down formal and structural conversations, most of the conversation and facts are distorted and adjusted (Xiong et al., 2018). Reimer (2008) stated that Hmong language learners had difficulty adjusting and picking up

English without formal education. Reimer also said that Hmong often struggle with picking up their written language. The lack of a formal written language leads to difficulty in establishing formal rules or structures, as many things are passed down informally.

Cultural Differences Between Generations

Another significant cultural difference for the Hmong in the United States is intergenerational cultural differences. Acculturation involves individuals changing traditional values and behaviors while adjusting to new cultural norms (Suinn et al., 1987). Although the Hmong have been in the United States for 40 years, many still hold and practice their traditional values (Pfeifer & Lee, 2005). Pfeifer and Lee (2005) stated that roughly 70% of Hmong Americans still practice and live according to their traditional values. The struggle between traditional Hmong values and American culture creates many issues for Hmong teens as they live a bicultural identity (Vagh et al., 2018). These intergenerational differences produce power distance, economic hardship, educational hardship, and unrealistic expectations (Vang, 2013).

A difference in culture for the Hmong American includes their view on education. In Laos, the Hmong see education as a secondary need compared to farming, which is the priority (Tapp, 2002). Lor (2018) mentioned that Hmong parents in America do not understand the American education system or the significance of education. Lor also wrote that Hmong students hold some of the lowest test scores among Asian students and have low graduation rates due to the hardship of the school system and lack of parental support. The older Hmong generations avoid participating in school functions and prohibit their children from participating in extracurricular activities (Moua, 2014). The lack of involvement from Hmong parents disengages the new generation of Hmong students, which leads to a lack of motivation to pursue higher education (Mao et al., 2012). In fact, according to Iannarelli (2014), Hmong students rank last among Southeast Asian Students in terms of high school graduation rates and postsecondary education. The differences in views and understanding of education between intergeneration create cultural variations and differences between Hmong Americans.

In addition to different views on education, gender equality is a big problem between the new and old generations of Hmong Americans. The masculinity versus femininity cultural dimension is evident in the Hmong community (Saechao-Elizalde, 2014). The older generation values males in the Hmong culture (Yang, 2012). Yang (2012) also mentioned that most breadwinners in Hmong households are men; however, the new Hmong American generation perceives men and women as equal. The American culture has influenced and created opportunities for Hmong women to obtain leadership positions (Peng & Solheim, 2015). The older Hmong generation sees the new generation of Hmong American women as disobedient, rebellious, and rejecting traditional Hmong values (Xiong & Huang, 2011). The rise of Hmong women creates cultural differences in traditional Hmong values, especially regarding Hmong leadership prototypes.

Summary

The literature review revealed a relationship between leadership prototypes and the influence of cultural variation. Hall and Lord (1998) noted that perception changes over time due to experiencing a new environment, culture, social interactions, and achievements. Initially, a leadership prototype comes from an individual's cognitive representation and expectation of attributes in a leader (Foti et al., 1982). As the culture change, leadership prototypes also change to meet the needs of followers and the new culture followers are trying to achieve (Blader & Chen, 2014). The cultural variation literature indicates that culture constantly changes and adapts (Čeněk et al., 2020). Culture is linked to an individual's current environment and may change if that environment is modified (Harris, 1968). The literature review shows that studies examining leadership are linked to culture and have a connecting relationship.

Scholars such as Yang (2012), Saechao-Elizalde (2014), and Moua (2001) all claimed that the American culture had influenced Hmong leadership in many ways. The literature review also reviewed the history of Hmong cultural values and leadership before arriving in the United States. Although there are many differences between both worlds, the Hmong's assimilation experience into American culture has challenged Hmong leadership. As the Hmong assimilated into the American

culture, changes from traditional male-dominant leadership and clan system to a more modern American approach created many challenges (Vang, 2005). These challenges include language barriers, intergenerational differences, and gender equality (Fang & Baker, 2013). After the death of General Vang Pao, the Hmong leadership prototype became more unclear as the Hmong progressed and assimilated into the American culture (Lor & Yang, 2012). The next chapter is an in-depth outline and justification of this study's design, the research methodology, participants' demographics, and data sources.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the methodology and procedures that guided the current study. Through this qualitative phenomenological study, I examined leadership prototypes and cultural variation amongst working Hmong men and women professionals in Minnesota. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) stated that qualitative research gathers rich knowledge regarding complex issues from people with first-hand experience. The central phenomenon of this research was based on three research questions and eight participants. Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and focuses on the perspective of how people interpret and make sense of their experiences (van Manen, 1990). The research methodology plan covered the research questions, methodology and design, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and study limitations.

Research Questions

In this study, I selected the qualitative methodology and phenomenological design to understand professional job-holding Hmong men and women's feelings and attitudes toward traditional Hmong leadership prototypes and how cultural variations have impacted these prototypes. The literature review indicated a connection between leadership prototypes and cultural variation. The leadership prototype changes as people embrace and experience a different culture. Hall and Lord (1998) explained that perceptions change as individuals experience new environments, groups, social interactions, and success or trauma. Throughout the study, my goal was to focus on understanding the perceptions and experiences of the participants to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota?
2. How have Hmong men and women in Minnesota experienced cultural variation?
3. What characteristics do Hmong women and men in Minnesota value in leadership?
4. How have cultural variations affected the values that Hmong men and women in Minnesota have about leadership?

Methodology Selected

A qualitative study was selected for this study. Qualitative was chosen due to the research aiming to explain a phenomenon through the perception of a person's experience in a given situation (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Creswell and Creswell (2003) mentioned that a qualitative research method is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions. In addition, qualitative research gathers comprehensive insights into a problem and generates new ideas for research (Maxwell, 1992). On the contrary, quantitative research generally focuses on measuring social reality and establishing research that deals with numbers, logic, and objective stance (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Connelly (2010) explained that phenomenology commonly uses a smaller and more purposeful size of participants but is more in-depth and personal than a survey or other research methods. This study examined how working professional Hmong men and women's experience of cultural variation influences their leadership prototype, and a qualitative phenomenology approach was the most appropriate choice.

For several reasons, the qualitative inquiry was employed to study working professional Hmong men and women living in Minnesota regarding leadership prototypes and cultural variation. Similar studies that focus on leadership prototypes are done using a qualitative approach to examine the qualities, characteristics, and meanings of individuals by conducting interviews, questionnaires, and observations (Foti et al., 1982; Hall & Lord, 1998; Lord et al., 1984; Rosch, 1978). I decided to conduct a qualitative study to capture the narratives of the participants' experiences and how they changed over time. Similar to other qualitative studies, the goal is to use narratives that add rich perspectives on an individual's experience (Butler-Kisber, 2010). I did not administer a survey to collect numerical data, as I was more interested in hearing about personal experience than static data on a survey or questionnaire. The interviews from a qualitative inquiry allowed me to create opportunities to give voice to my participants and allow participants to share stories in their own words. Lastly, I believe that spending time during an in-depth interview was essential to me

collecting genuine emotions about the participants' experiences and having the opportunity to ask questions to have a better understanding of the phenomena. Due to these reasons, I decided to use a phenomenological approach in this study to increase my understanding of the participants, rather than using a quantitative inquiry approach.

For the purposes of this research study, a phenomenological methodology is used to gain an understanding of participants' lived experiences. The phenomenology approach takes a more in-depth investigation into the direct experiences and description of phenomena as consciously experienced by an individual or group (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Kartolo (2022) used phenomenology methods to study the impact of gender and ethnic stereotypes on leadership to explore how leaders are viewed differently based on predetermined expectations. The goal was to examine the lived experiences and what occurred to set the predetermined expectations. This study centered on the experiences of Hmong men and women and how the cultural variance of residing in Minnesota impacts the participant's leadership prototypes. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that phenomenology allows the exploration of a shared phenomenon with individuals and uses lived experiences of all individuals to find commonality. I chose phenomenology for this study because I intended to interpret the lived experiences of working Hmong professionals in Minnesota.

Qualitative Research Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry is more fitting when studying phenomena that have not been previously explained. Furthermore, qualitative research takes an interpretive, naturalistic approach and analyzes things in their natural settings (Jones, 1995). Researchers rely on qualitative research inquiry to draw social sciences and humanities in guiding the research process and assist in explaining their findings (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021). Liamputtong (2019) stated that qualitative research inquiry examines broad social circumstances and constructs an attempt to find answers in the real world. Qualitative inquiry creates opportunities to explore new phenomena that have not been studied and draw directly from human experience in their natural settings.

In addition, qualitative research inquiry is used to help interpret facts from data. Weinberg (2002) wrote that facts depend on the qualities people actively use to gain experiences of the phenomena. In contrast, quantitative is more focused on statistical, mathematical, and numerical analysis of collected data. Denzin et al. (2006) wrote that, in a sense, qualitative research allows participants to voice and share their experiences with the rest of the world by giving their personal experiences. Researchers can then observe and interpret these significant experiences and organize the data collected to explain phenomena. Marshall and Rossman (2014) argued that in short, the strength of qualitative research inquiry is to demonstrate research that stresses the importance of personal experience in its natural setting and understanding the thoughts and raw emotions of the participants.

Due to the nature of this study, a qualitative research inquiry was appropriate. The aim of this study was to explore the raw and unfiltered experiences of working professional Hmong men and women in Minnesota and how cultural variation has impacted their leadership prototype. I sought to explore the experiences that professional working Hmong men and women have experienced or what influenced their perception of leadership prototypes. The qualitative study consisted of six common types of research such as ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, case study, action research, and phenomenological (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Instead of looking at logical and statistical procedures, I chose a qualitative research inquiry to look at professional working Hmong men and women and their experiences regarding cultural variation and leadership prototypes.

Phenomenological Theory Methodology

Phenomenological theory and research design were chosen for this study for multiple reasons. Through this inquiry intended to analyze the lived experiences of working professional Hmong Americans in Minnesota and how cultural variation has impacted their leadership prototype. Balls (2009) stated that phenomenology as a philosophical framework examines human consciousness and feelings and emotions from which those experiences form the consciousness. In addition, the reaction of how Hmong working professional men and women view these cultural

variations may impact their leadership prototype. Phenomenology states that the human experience and the reaction of an individual reflect the direct impact of the choices and actions of the individual (Neubauer et al., 2019). The Hmong faced refugee resettlement and had a long and traumatic experience that took years to overcome, which included learning a new sociocultural environment and practices (DeSantiago, 2020). It makes sense to examine how individuals reflect and their choices to adapt or remain constant, as well as whether the cultural variance has altered their leadership prototype.

The phenomenology approach is the most effective way of understanding a person's or group's lived experiences for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon from the individual's perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Understanding the living experiences of Hmong men versus women allowed me to understand how different experiences impacted their leadership prototypes. This is critical, as Thompson (2020) wrote that Hmong women's experience has many factors involved, such as barriers, limitations, cultural expectations, family obligations, and guilt due to preserving traditions in the modern age. The lived experiences and in-depth understanding of Hmong men and women allowed me to interpret a more combust description of the participant's world regarding cultural variation and leadership prototypes. Gallagher (2012) described the goal of phenomenology, where the people experiencing the phenomenon can communicate their perceptions to others outside of their world and answer questions that others may have to understand the experience. This may allow individuals outside of the Hmong community and individuals who may not have a similar background to understand how leadership prototype change with cultural variation.

Although this study focused on the Hmong community overall, the experience and analysis was done by examining individual experiences. Often, phenomenology is used to study how a particular group of individuals with similarities experience or react to a situation (van Manen, 2017). Phenomenology can only be explained based on a personal experience from oneself, not an individual describing someone else's experience (Gallagher, 2012). This is why it is important to view each individual's experience independently and not assume

they may have similar experiences. It is rare for phenomenology to attempt to explain or speak on things (Neubauer et al., 2019). Van Manen (2017) stated that phenomenology focuses on how things appear and is the experience that researchers are targeting. Due to this reason, each participant was asked to share different upbringing, family dynamics, acclimation rates, or other possible factors that may impact the experience. This presented a unique opportunity to capture and analyze participants' experiences regarding cultural variation and leadership prototypes to contribute to this qualitative phenomenological study.

Participants

When selecting participants for phenomenological research, the most crucial factor is to have participants who have experienced the phenomenon and can articulate their lived experiences (Creswell et al., 2007). In addition, participants must not only experience the phenomenon but also be interested in understanding its nature and meanings (Moustakas, 1994). Data were collected from individuals who fit specific criteria to determine participants who have experienced the phenomenon of being a working Hmong professional and experiencing cultural variation to see how their leadership prototype has changed. By selecting participants who have experienced the phenomenon and articulating the experience and meanings, the collected data fit more into the research and provide essential and meaningful data (Creswell et al., 2007).

A purposeful sampling technique was used to select participants. Sampling is a method of gathering knowledge about a whole population from a restricted number of units (Etikan et al., 2016). The purposeful sampling technique describes a group of selected individuals who can provide helpful information to help understand the research phenomenon and contribute to the overall study (Creswell et al., 2007). A part of the purposeful sampling technique is identifying participant requirements (Ames et al., 2019). Under purposeful sampling, there is also judgment sampling, in which the researcher selects only those participants who can answer the research questions (Merriam, 2002). This study used purposeful sampling and judgment sampling.

Judgment and purposeful sampling allow the researcher to select participants who will fit the research. In order to find participants who can answer the research questions, there were some criteria that the participants were required to meet. The requirement criteria for this study were being Hmong, between the age of 28 and 45, a Minnesota resident, a working professional, and willing to participate in the research. Another criterion was having grown up in a cross-cultural household where traditional Hmong values and American values were present. For this to be possible, individuals were required to be from a specific age group with parents who were not born or raised in the United States. These requirements allowed the small sample size of participants to meet all these requirements while knowing that they have experienced the phenomenon under study.

Data Collection

Data were collected from eight participants who fit all of the requirements. Data collection in this study will be done through in-person interviews. The gender breakdown for these eight participants is four males and four females, with eight total participants. Participants identified as Hmong Americans and over 28 years of age. Participants also identified as Minnesota residents, particularly in Minneapolis and St. Paul. All participants were working professionals and had worked in their field for at least 1 year. In addition, all participants must allow audio recording of the interview, which is a critical component of my analysis process. Due to using purposeful sampling, the participants in this study are individuals who fit all requirements.

The initial process of data collection began with reaching out to the participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) mentioned that qualitative research allows individuals to share their stories but also understand that anything a participant shares will be protected. Individuals that I identified as possible participants received an invitation email (see Appendix A) seeking their participation in the study. The initial email also contained the consent form from Southeastern University (see Appendix B). Participants who confirmed partaking completed the study completed the consent form. Once an agreed time, location, and date were

established, a confirmation email was sent to participants (see Appendix C). This email included the time, place, and location to meet for the in-person interview. All participants received a confirmation email and text message as a reminder for the in-person interview on the day of the meeting. During the meeting, I reviewed the audio recording process and asked again for consent to record the interview. I also informed each participant that their time was voluntary and that at any point during the interview, the participant could stop the interview and leave for any reason. Small casual conversations were used throughout the interview to make the participants feel relaxed and comfortable sharing personal experiences. After the in-person interview, a thank-you email (see Appendix D) was sent to all participants. All audio recordings were made available for participants to review upon their request. I allowed this to remove any uncertainty or anything the participant may want to withdraw from the transcription. Lastly, I asked all participants whether they had any further questions or concerns regarding the in-person interview or any future process in the study.

The structure of the in-person interviews served to accommodate the participants. The interviews were set for 60 minutes each, but going over was allowed if additional time was needed. Weinmann et al. (2012) noted that face-to-face interviews last longer than virtual interviews and contain more in-depth answers. I anticipated that more than 60 minutes might be needed because the interviews were semistructured with open-ended questions, acknowledging the possibility of probing and asking additional questions for clarification to allow participants to share their entire experience. Heimann et al. (2020) performed a similar approach of semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to capture leadership experiences. The results showed participants were more willing to share detailed experiences than structured, planned questions. The combination of in-person and semistructured interviews with open-ended questions allowed a more comprehensive environment for participants to share their cultural variation experience regarding leadership prototypes.

Due to the nature of this study and questions regarding participants' experiences with cultural variation and leadership prototypes, a possible follow-up

meeting could have been needed. The participants or I could request a follow-up meeting if it was determined that there is a need to follow up on some answers during the first interview. Follow-up interviews allow participants to reassess prior questions and the researcher to follow up with more in-depth questions to understand the participants' experiences (Zanarini et al., 2003). Follow-ups were also available if requested by participants to discuss any aspect of the study in that they may have questions. Once a follow-up interview was necessary, a confirmation email was sent out, and a confirmation text was sent again on the day of the meeting. The goal was to ensure all participants were comfortable speaking about their experiences, remaining professional and respectful.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is used for many reasons. One reason for qualitative research is to identify patterns and themes from nonnumerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Identifying patterns and recognizing themes during the data analysis process aims to tell a story from the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thematic analysis was used as the independent qualitative descriptive approach identifying, analyze, and report themes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the audio-recorded in-person interviews, the audio recording were transcribed verbatim and interpreted. The transcriptions were coded systemically and categorized into themes and patterns. The code analysis used pattern and axial coding to find similarities and relationships between the codes (Williams & Moser, 2019). The transcription and coding was done on computer software. All patterns and themes from the coding were used to understand better the cultural variation and its impact on leadership prototypes for working professional Hmong men and women. The coding process included open, descriptive, process, in vivo, and value coding.

Open Coding

Open coding is known as a common first step in qualitative research analysis. Glaser (2016) mentioned that open coding starts right after collecting qualitative data, such as transcriptions from interviews. Holton (2007) stated that the data from the transcriptions are broken into parts, and labels, or codes, are given

to them. The focus of labeling and coding the data is to compare and contrast similar occurrences within the data (Khandkar, 2009). Within this study, open coding was used to find similarities among the eight different participants. From there, the analysis also looks to determine whether similar labels appear among the participants who may share similar demographics and upbringings. Open coding is the first coding technique in this study's data analysis regarding cultural variation and leadership prototypes for Hmong men and women who are working professionals.

Descriptive Coding

Descriptive coding was the second coding method used in the data analysis. Descriptive coding involves predominantly nouns that condense the topic of a datum (Saldaña, 2009). Wicks (2017) mentioned that descriptive codes are used to analyze what is being talked about and are helpful when researchers gather different data types for one study. Although this particular study focused only on data from audio-recorded interviews, observation of the participants were monitored to determine whether any visuals and body language stood out. Descriptive coding helped me to cluster codes into similar categories to identify patterns such as frequency and connections between different categories (Saldaña, 2009). The descriptive coding was informed by the frequency of how often the participants mention a particular aspect of cultural variation or the change in leadership prototype to find connections between all participants.

In Vivo Coding

In vivo coding is used in many qualitative data analyses. In vivo coding is a form of qualitative data analysis that concentrates on the actual spoken words of the participants during the data collection process (Manning, 2017). In vivo coding is helpful with participants in a particular culture or microculture to highlight different words or phrases in their interactions that might not be misunderstood (Rogers, 2018). For this study, in vivo coding helped me to understand participants' words to describe their cultural change and assimilation of the Hmong and American cultures. In addition, some phrases and terms may be specific to the Hmong language. Without coding the exact word, there may be misunderstandings

and interpretations. Regarding in vivo coding, Creswell (2015) wrote that "in vivo codes are best because they move you towards the voices of participants, which you want to reflect in your realistic final report. (p. 160). In vivo coding was part of the data analysis process because it is a form of coding that allowed for an accurate understanding of the Hmong culture and how the mixture into American culture may have changed the leadership prototype for working professional Hmong men and women.

Process Coding

Another coding technique that was used for the data analysis was process coding. Process coding uses codes to communicate an action in the data (Gonzalez, 2016). Typically phrases or words that end with "-ing" is part of process coding (Elliott, 2018). Process coding was used in the data analysis portion to help dissect the audio-recorded interviews to understand actions and conceptual actions. Wicks (2017) stated that process coding is not meant to be a standalone coding method. It is an essential coding technique to understand the rituals and habits of people while capturing the steps of events (Saldaña, 2009). In this study, I used process coding to analyze the actions of the cultural variation and how it impacts professional Hmong men and women on their leadership prototype perspectives. I used it to capture and analyze the everyday feelings and habits of a Hmong person living in American and traditional Hmong culture. Process coding was used as one of the four coding techniques in the study.

Value Coding

The last coding method used was value coding. Value coding examines the intimate nature of the human experience relating to values, attitudes, beliefs, and expression (Khaw et al., 2017). Saldaña (2009) also stated that the value coding method looks at the heart and minds of individuals but also at the group's worldview as to what they value. Value coding allows researchers to identify what is essential to the participant by looking at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural constructs (Saldaña, 2009). The three categories used for value coding categorization are values, attitudes, and beliefs. Value coding enabled me to analyze participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding leadership prototypes

and cultural variation as they experience the dual culture of being Hmong and living in Minnesota.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is essential, as it protects human subjects throughout the research study by governing appropriate ethical principles (Arifin, 2018). All participants in this study were protected during and after the study. All contributors' answers and identities remained confidential. Participants were asked by invitation only to partake in the study. They were required to complete and agree to the study before participating. Once they had accepted the invitation and signed the interview consent form created by Southeastern Universities (see Appendix B), participants were given my phone number and email if any questions arose during or after the study. All information and communication discussed during the research was only available to myself and the university.

Participation in this study and interview was voluntary, and at any time, the participants could have elected to decline a question. Participants were also free to leave, resign, or terminate their role at any study time if a question was uncomfortable or worries them. All participants associated with an organization had the option to exclude naming their title and organization. The Hmong males and females in the study could remain anonymous if they chose to, and an alias such as Female Participant 1 would have been given. The interviews were one-on-one and private, so experiences and stories were recommended and invited. Any specific examples were not required. Krueger and Casey (2015) suggested that some participants are reluctant to share personal information that may identify themselves to their company or association for fear of backlash and retaliation from leaders in the organization. A top priority was creating a welcoming and safe space for all participants during and after the interview and ensuring their information stays confidential. Lastly, no data were shared with the participant's friends or family unless requested directly by the participants.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was the location of the participants. Although Minnesota has a significant population of Hmong people, other states, such as Wisconsin and California, also have substantial pockets of Hmong communities (Yang, 2012). This limitation only captures Hmong people living in Minnesota's leadership prototypes and cultural variation experience. A broader study that includes participants from all over the United States would provide a more inclusive and comprehensive result regarding cultural variation and the Hmong leadership prototype.

Another limitation is my selection of working professionals between the ages of 28 and 45. Moua (2020) wrote that intergeneration within the Hmong community has a different perspective on leadership. As working professionals, many hold a college degree or some formal education. Phannaphob (2018) stated that Hmong Americans with a college degree have different observations and acclimation to the American culture than those more traditional. Although situations differ on who grew up in a conventional or more Americanized household, all of these participants currently hold some professional work or business. Many Hmong between the ages of 28 and 45 have a mixture of Hmong and American cultures. Participants in this age group are more likely to grow up in a traditional Hmong household while having to assimilate into the American culture (Moua, 2020). The Hmong and American culture mix would impact cultural variation and leadership prototypes due to participants' experiences in both cultures. The view and perspective on the leadership prototype may change with a different age group and how participants were raised.

Summary

In this chapter, I clarified my rationale behind selecting a qualitative research design and why a phenomenology inquiry is used for this study's research method. This chapter also covered many other areas relating to the research methodology and process. The research question was the foundation of why the specific qualitative and phenomenology inquiry was utilized. Next, the purposeful sampling technique is explained as to why this technique is used and who the

participants were in the study. Data collection was done through an in-person interview, and data analysis included five process coding techniques. Lastly, this chapter also contained a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 – Findings

In this study, I examined the lived experiences and perceptions of Hmong men and women in Minnesota regarding their leadership prototypes and cultural variations. A purposeful sampling technique was used to identify eight Hmong working professionals living in Minnesota to partake in the study. The participants in this study were categorized as men and women aged 28 and 45 years. A phenomenological approach was used to acquire the data from the participants. The semistructured face-to-face interviews were conducted individually using open-ended questions to understand each participant's perceptions and experiences. In addition, each participant was asked to share their demographic information before asking the interview questions. To ensure consistency, all participants were asked the same set of questions. Probing questions were asked spontaneously to clarify and gain additional context regarding a particular participant's answers.

There were eight total participants in this study. Out of the eight participants, four were female and four were male. All participants are working professionals in various industries. All participants identified as Hmong and currently living in Minnesota. Participants were asked demographic questions at the beginning of the interview, and all participants were also between 28 and 45 years of age. Every participant in this study was given an alias, such as Participant 1, to maintain confidentiality. Participant demographics information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant #	Age	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Gender
Participant 1	43	Married	U.S.	Female
Participant 2	33	Married	U.S.	Female
Participant 3	31	Single	U.S.	Female
Participant 4	30	Married	U.S.	Female
Participant 5	40	Married	U.S.	Male
Participant 6	32	Married	U.S.	Male
Participant 7	31	Single	U.S.	Male
Participant 8	35	Single	U.S.	Male

Note. Demographic questions were asked at the beginning of the interview.

The data gathered from the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed in multiple ways. The interview recordings were done on an iPhone application that utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) voice recognition technology program called Otter.ai (Gray et al., 2020). The Otter.ai platform transcribed the interviews and turned the audio conversations into text (Gray et al., 2020). First, I read the transcriptions of each participant numerous times to ensure a comprehensive understanding. Secondly, keeping the research questions in mind, I mentally paired each participant's answers to answer the four research questions. Once the transcriptions were read over carefully, the transcriptions were loaded into MAXQDA 2022. MAXQDA 2022 is a software package to analyze qualitative data and provides various purposes for effective and efficient data analysis, specifically with coding qualitative analysis (Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie, 2022). After the coding was done, I analyzed the codes to find common themes.

Results

To help understand the data from the interviews and how it relates to leadership prototypes and cultural variation amongst Hmong men and women working professionals in Minnesota, there were 10 main interview questions based on four research questions. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Tell me about your household and upbringing.

    a. Family dynamics and relationships between parents and siblings

2. What is your experience growing up as a Hmong person living in Minnesota?

    a. What are some of your values?

    b. Does that differ from any of your other Hmong peers?

3. Tell me about some challenges you experienced living in both the Hmong and American cultures.

4. The definition of cultural variation is the differences in people and cultural norms and behavior that have developed over time due to social learning. How have you experienced cultural variation?

    a. What have you learned from living in more than one culture?

5. Who is your ideal leader?

    a. What are some characteristics that you value in a leader?

        i. Physical traits and behavior/mental traits

6. Can you describe your perception of leadership growing up and your perception of leadership now?

7. What has influenced your perceptions of leadership?

8. What are some things you value in the Hmong culture that you also see in the American culture?

9. Again, cultural variation is the differences in people and cultural norms and behavior that have developed over time due to social learning. How has cultural variation affected your view on leadership?

10. In what ways have you integrated the American culture and Hmong culture into your leadership view?

The four research questions were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota?

2. How have Hmong men and women in Minnesota experienced cultural variation?

3. What characteristics do Hmong women and men in Minnesota value in leadership?

4. How have cultural variations affected the values that Hmong men and
   women in Minnesota have about leadership?

From the interview data, four themes emerged in response to the research question.
Table 2 shows how the themes connect to the research questions.

Table 2

Summary of Themes

Research Question	Theme
Research Question 1	Navigating household expectations and socioeconomic challenges
Research Question 2	Unlearning gender expectations and traditional values
Research Question 3	Leadership trait preferences
Research Question 4	Cultural variable enabled transformation in leadership view

Summary of Themes

I discovered four emerging themes that were most present after coding the
data from the interviews. The four themes that emerged included (a) navigating
household expectations and socioeconomic challenges, (b) unlearning gender
expectations and traditional values, (c) leadership trait preferences, and (d) cultural
variation enabled transformation in leadership view. Within these four themes,
there were codes used to help determine the themes. In this section, the four themes
and their associated codes are described in depth through summaries and direct
quotes from participants.

There were a total of 681 data segments reflected in the qualitative analysis.
Within the 681 data segments, 11 codes emerged. Based on the 11 codes, four
themes developed from the coding process. The first theme, navigating household
expectations and socioeconomic challenges (253), was broken down into the
following codes: respect your elders (83), education (81), and socioeconomic
challenges (89). The second theme, unlearning gender expectations and traditional
values (145), was broken down into the following codes: gender differences (54)

and traditional values (91). The third theme, leadership trait preferences (108), was broken down into the following codes: empathy (27), compassion (23), leading by example (32), and keeping their words (26). The fourth and last theme, cultural variation enabled transformation in leadership (175), was broken down into the following codes: cultural variation (93) and leadership influence (82). A summary of the themes is provided in Table 3. The code column in Table 3 represents the code that was used to code the data. The data segments column in Table 3 is the time the code was present throughout all eight participant's interview data. Codes are presented in brackets and italics as demonstrated: [*code*].

Table 3

Summary of Themes

Theme	Codes	Data Segments
Navigating household expectations and socioeconomic challenges	Respect your elders	83
	Education	81
	Socioeconomic challenges	89
Unlearning gender expectations and traditional values	Gender differences	54
	Traditional values	91
Leadership trait preferences	Empathy	27
	Compassion	23
	Leading by example	32
	Keeping their words	26
Cultural variation enabled Transformation in leadership view	Cultural variation	93
	Leadership influence	82

Navigating Household Expectations and Socioeconomic Challenges

For the first theme, there were a total of 253 data segments making up four codes: respect your elders (83), education (81), and socioeconomic challenges (89). The household expectations of Hmong men or women are embedded in the Hmong culture. Ngo and Lor (2013) stated that Hmong households consist of multiple generations, and the expectations of respecting your elders are critical. Participants stated that household expectations during their childhood included respecting their elders, translating and caring for younger siblings, along with attending school. Participants stated that their biggest responsibilities were to attend school and

obtain an education. Some of the challenges that all participants expressed were growing up in poverty and limited resources. This is often associated with Hmong parents not having a good job or only having one parent working.

Respect Your Elders

Hmong children were raised to respect their elders and to be obedient. Some parents are strict and traditional, so they expect their children to listen and follow their orders. In addition, there are expectations in the household that the parents are the leaders and children as their subordinates. In occurrences when the children talk back or do not follow the rules, it can be a sign of disrespect. A sign of respect is to not talk directly to one's parents. Participant 1 stated,

> I feel like I was closer to my mom. Although we don't talk every day. And I don't feel like we have that friendship connection [*respect your elders*]. We just aren't very talkative to each other. My dad and I, we also don't talk much [*respect your elders*]. And when we do talk, it's about very serious situations only [*respect your elders*]. Never joked around never laugh or have fun with my dad anyways, when I got older, he wasn't as strict anymore. And he joked a little bit more but it was still that strict mannerism [*respect your elders*].

Another participant also shared a similar experience with Participant 1. When asked about his relationship with his parents, Participant 6 shared,

> Oh, it was okay. I, you know, I wasn't much of a rebellious kid [*respect your elders*]. You know, I was very I'm very obedient [*respect your elders*]. My, mom and my dad are, they're all kind of strict [*traditional values*], and to myself growing up as the oldest you know, go to school come back home you know, don't go anywhere much [*respect your elders*].

Participant 6 talked about the expectation of him being an obedient child and not rebelling against his parent's strict rules. Participant 6 also shared his experience when he went against the expectations of being an obedient child:

> And there was a miscommunication to my dad and myself, and my younger brother. And he thought that I backstabbed them [*respect your elders*]. He thought that I took my mom's side [*respect your elders*] during divorce and

you know, he kicked me out, disowned me and my little brother [*respect your elders*] and it wasn't the same since and I didn't have a dad for, you know, 6, 7 years.

The expectation is to respect your elders at all costs. Participant 6 stated that he was in the top 5% of his class and had plans to attend college until the divorce. Due to the misunderstanding, his father kicked him out of his own home because his father thought he was not respecting his elders.

Participant 3 stated that she also had a fallout with her father due to expectations of respecting her father. She stated,

I love my parents and all but that's when like the ugly like demon side of my dad came out and so I just really, I really resented my father [*respect your elders*]. And so, I resented him a lot. I even at one point, I like I wished him dead. You know like it was that bad.

Although the household expectation is to respect your elders, Participant 3 shared the frustration of when expectations are troublesome such as demanding her to care for her father because she is the baby girl, even when he is constantly drunk.

Hmong fathers are typically the head of the household in the family. From birth until current, participants mentioned that this is rooted in the way they were raised. All participants talked about the dynamic relationship between their fathers during their upbringing. Regardless of the participant's gender, multiple participants mentioned that the expectation to respect their father is critical. Participant 8 did not explain in detail the respect his father demanded but expressed,

 Um, just pretty much respect the elders [*respect your elders*]. Respect your older brothers [*respect your elders*], everyone around you. Being kind to others. I would say my relationship is, just normal with my mom and dad.

Dad was head of household so, that was pretty much it [*respect your elders*]

Participant 4 also echoed the importance of respecting her father—also the head of her household—growing up. Participant 4 also stated that there were certain things she could not do. Participant 4 mentioned,

So, starting off with my dad, he's very he's very, in a way like conservative [*traditional value*] very, like I almost feel like we have like a professional relationship [*respect your elders*] in the house right? But he obviously he's still lectured us like how you know when people do for the kids but he never like hugged us with our younger sisters now. I think he's kind of you know, kind of softened up over the years more sensitive so he hugs them but like they're like what almost teenagers now and he still hugs them and says like, I love you once in a while, but we didn't get that. I remember my dad like he would not let us sit with him in the front seat [*respect your elders*]. Because he was like you're too close to me like this is not appropriate [*respect your elders*]. You know, that's his relationship with us.

To show respect to her father, the expectation is that she will not sit next to her father in the vehicle. Participant 4 also mentioned that her dad is very traditional, so he has different values, but she knows that her father still loves her very much.

The household expectation of Hmong men and women during their upbringings is to show respect to their elders. It is rooted in the Hmong household that respect is the foundation of their upbringing due to their position in the household. In addition, the expectation is that fathers are held in higher respect as they are the head of the household. When the expectations of respecting one's elders are not met, it is a sign of disrespect. The pressure of growing up in a Hmong household is to respect their elders at all times.

Education

The second code is education. Education was described as a main point of focus regarding expectations. All participants mentioned their parents stressing the significance of being a good student and obtaining a good education. Many received reminders that their parents fled to the United States as refugees in order for them to receive an education, something their parents did not get the opportunity to attain. All participants are college graduates and shared the expectations of being a good student and how that contributed to their educational success. Participant 7 stated,

I was the first to go to college [*education*]. I was first to go to high school [*education*]. So, it's like whatever I set I set the precedence and then they either you know, try to reach it or surpass it. And so, my mom was kind of just a stay-at-home mom and she didn't really, she did raise us alongside my dad, but then, for some reason, I just remember me being, being really, I guess, loyal to kind of his vision of what who I should be. It's so much affected the way the classes I chose for college [*education*] is chose the way I chose, like, what to do with my educational [*education*] background and my job outlook.

The expectation of obtaining a good education is evident, as Participant 7 mentioned that his father's vision is to have him be the first to attend college so his young siblings can follow. The expectation also affected the way he chose his college, classes, and his career.

In addition to expecting children in the household to make education their main focus, parents also expect their kids to attend college. All participants stated that attending college was not an option, it was the expectation. For some participants, it was the only way out of their parent's household and meet expectations. Participant 8 shared,

Higher education [*education*] for sure. My parents always ingrained that in our brains like in order to succeed or the American Dream is just go as high as you could with your education [*education*], become doctors, lawyers, all of that. My dad said we came here for education [*education*], so that's all we were taught. You need to be smart and educated [*education*]to have a good life in America. Like, I said, the American Dream.

Similar to Participant 8, Participant 3 also stated that education was important and that it was expected for her to obtain a high education. Participant 3 was so eager for a high education, and because it is expected, she just went off to college. Participant 3 expressed,

I'm just like, I'm just gonna go off to college [*education*] and live there. I was the first child to do that. Like to go off to college[*education*] and live

> on campus [*education*] and I wouldn't come back home like only like for
>
> holidays and breaks and stuff like that.

This shows that getting a higher education is important and expected. Many of the

participants stated that they were expected to get a high education and live a better

life than their parents.

Hmong households expect their kids to attend college and obtain a good

education, so when the focus is not on education, it comes as a shock to the

participants. Participant 2 stated that she was not familiar with the idea that Hmong

parents did not want their kids to go to college and were stunned when her Hmong

peers mentioned she was not attending college. Participant 2 recalled,

> And so, I think I was completely dumbfounded when I was in my senior
>
> year in high school [*education*]. And I asked my friends, you know,
>
> everyone was talking about what school [*education*] they were going to,
>
> where they got accepted, and the financial aid packages and what not. And
>
> then, when my friend was said that she was not going to college
>
> [*education*], and that threw me for a loop, because I just always assumed
>
> with my dad being in my life the way he was, that was just whatever
>
> everybody does [*expectations*]. I thought it was a nonnegotiable
>
> [*expectation*], like going to grade school, and then middle school, and high
>
> school [*education*]. I just assumed everybody goes, goes to college
>
> [*education*]. And so, when I heard that, I was dumbfounded and asked her,
>
> "Well, why not?" And she said, it's because her parents didn't want her to
>
> go. And that was even more confusing to me, because I thought it was her
>
> that didn't want to go, it was like, "What did your parents want, for you to
>
> not go and get to a higher education [*education*] for a better life?" You
>
> know, because that's what I was told [*expectation*]. My parents are mad,
>
> they would be mad if we didn't go to college [*education*], but hers was the
>
> reverse. And her parents' logic was if she didn't go to college [*education*],
>
> one, they wouldn't have to take out so much money to support that. But
>
> also, she could work and support the family instead. And I think that opened
>
> my eyes to another, you know, just a different perspective of life.

For Participant 2, the idea of not going to college is a foreign concept. Her upbringing revolves around being a good student, going to middle school, high school, and then going to college. It was expected that go to college. Participant 1 also echoed the same concept that school came first. She stated,

> The focus was always education [*education*]. Do educate [*education*]. Go to school first, do your homework first. Even though I was a girl [*gender differences*]*,* they, didn't ask me to do any chores. It was first do your schoolwork [*education*].

Many participants stated that education is the way to have a better life than their parents. Participant 1 found that education was a way out of her parent's household. She expressed,

> For me, personally, education [*education*] was, was my way out of my parents' household. Because as a Hmong girl, I knew that I could not just leave my parents' house by myself alone, after high school [*education*] and marriage was not something I wanted at that time. So, my key to be able to leave was go to college [*education*].

This showed that going to college is critical in the participants' households. It also showed that college is used as an opportunity to break away from their parents' household and the expectations that come from living in the home. Education was also taught that it would provide a better life for the participants. As participants shared the importance of education, all of these participants hold college degrees.

Socioeconomic Challenges

Hmong people in the U.S. are refugees fleeing from war. Participants were asked about their experiences growing up in Minnesota. Many described their experience as positive, but including many challenges. Some of the challenges were growing up in poverty and living in project homes and low-income neighborhoods. Regarding low income, many participants stated that they grew up in a single-income household where only one parent worked. They expressed that they did not have enough money to buy the latest technology or live in the nicest neighborhood in town. In fact, many of them lived amongst other Hmong families who were also in poverty.

Low-income families are common across all participants' stories, including making the best out of what their parents were able to afford for them. Participant 1 stated,

> We lived in a predominantly urban area. There was a lot, it was low low-income neighborhoods [*household challenges*], hardly any suburban families.

Participant 4 shared a similar experience:

> Of course, we were immigrant families. So, we had our share of struggles [*household challenges*], we were poor working families [*household challenges*], poor working immigrant families [*household challenges*].

Participant 3 reiterated that her family grew up in poverty as well. However, she made the best out of her situation:

> Yeah, like, I remember going to school and getting free lunch [*household challenges*]. And then there will be those other kids that aren't eating because they have to pay for lunch. And they're like, oh, well, I'm not eating because I can't pay for lunch. I was just like, oh, you're not poor enough for reduce lunch [*household challenges*]? It was funny, you know, I think back about it, I was just like, wow, I really…I really glorify that. That my parents, they were so poor [*household challenges*], that we got, you know, all these social welfares [*household challenges*], these free lunch [*household challenges*] and single public schools. And I kind of think back, I was just like, I'm really grateful for you know, for the opportunity to go into what is it like extracurricular programs to like Upward Bound and, and give me the opportunity to experience you know, certain privileges that I wouldn't have been able to get from my parents [*household challenges*], right?

The experience shared by Participant 3 showed that although many participants experienced household challenges, they made the most of their household challenges.

Another household challenge that the participants experienced was being raised in areas that were not ideal. Many participants stated that their homes did not

have adequate space for everyone. All participants stated that they did not live in ideal neighborhoods or rich areas. Some participants also stated that they moved around due to financial struggles. Participant 8 stated,

> We grew up in Section Eight housing [*household challenges*], so like the ghetto. In my childhood, we just lived in the project [*household challenges*]. So, it was like a neighborhood of all Hmong people. Everyone in the projects [*household challenges*] are pretty much the same value. They, they all had similar values, like, just going to school, do the best you could and make money.

Similar to Participant 8, Participant 6 also expressed,

> We went through tough times. My mom filed for bankruptcy [*household challenges*]. And we, we call that period of time, my brothers and we called it period time, our whole you know, we live in a four-plex house [*household challenges*]. All my siblings, my stepdad and my mom. We live with cockroaches, live with mice [*household challenges*]. Until, you know, 5 years until my mom's bankruptcy was off her credit [*household challenges*].

Participant 4 also stated that her family moved around due to many reasons and also because they had nine kids, plus her parents. She stated,

> Mainly live in St. Paul. Every year or so. We would like move [*household challenges*], so we would have to changed schools. I think I went to a different school almost every year up until third grade [*household challenges*]. We shared like a room with me, you know, depending on like how big the houses [*household challenges*] were, you know what as we moved to, but usually the girls would be together so that we were close like that.

Inadequate space in the home, along with moving every year, created challenges for Participant 4. Most participants that did have a home for longer than a few years were in the projects, too small, or in rough neighborhoods. Participant 7 shared,

> You know, we're living kind of in the poor [*household challenges*] kind of hood areas [*household challenges*] and so there's, you know, kind of race wars or like where you were, like, not be friends with anybody who wasn't

your kind. And I didn't understand that dynamic growing up because I was kind of like ignorant kid not understanding the kind of oppression like immigrant, especially like Hmong people get [*household challenges*].

Several participants mentioned the lack of ideal living neighbors.

Hmong household and their upbringings were met with many struggles. The household expectations and challenges influenced the participant's upbringing. The household expectations were to respect the elders, and all children were expected to do well in school to obtain a high education. Lastly, the challenges of all participants' upbringing and experience are living in poverty and less than ideal homes.

Unlearning Gender Expectations and Traditional Values

For the second theme, there were a total of 145 data segments making up two codes: gender differences (54) and traditional values (91). Hmong men and women were raised with certain roles, depending on their gender. Hmong boys are to behave in certain ways compared to Hmong girls, and this leaves each gender feeling vulnerable if they deviate from the norm. Hmong gender expectations were visible in my interviews, as several Hmong boys stated they were to carry on the family's name and legacy. On the contrary, some Hmong girl participants stated they were expected to be calm and gentle and do more of the house chores. All participants were raised in Hmong households, with both parents being Hmong, but several participants stated that sons were favored to be closer to their father, as they are expected also to be the man of the house. Hmong women were expected to be lesser than their brothers, as some mentioned they were not allowed to do certain things that their brothers were able to do. Hmong men and women in this study had to unlearn some of these gender expectations and traditional values as they experienced cultural variation.

Gender Differences

One of the gender role expectations for Hmong boys growing up is to carry on the family legacy. Male participants stated that they were favored over their sisters because they were Hmong men. Participant 7 expressed,

> Since growing up I understood that being a Hmong male [*gender
> differences*] and being the oldest and technically my older brother, but then
> he's developing disabled. So, my dad and mom, I was considered to be the
> oldest and so I kind of grew up understanding and I don't want to say groom
> but then being kind of taught that hey, you know, you're gonna lead the
> mantle [*gender differences*]. When you know mom, dad gets old, it's going
> to be your responsibility to continue the culture [*gender differences*],
> continue the family lineage [*gender differences*], and kind of lead.

Participant 6 mentioned a similar experience where he was taught to take on the
family legacy by being more involve in his Hmong clan. Participant 6 shared,

> So, I have my older cousins, who will be like, hey, I think you should be
> one of our board members [*gender differences*]. For a clan I was like, why
> me? You know, I, you know, I'm still a young buck. I still consider myself a
> young buck, you know, I have you these big, big brothers [*gender
> differences*] and our cousins…that could hold positions, you know. No, no,
> no, no, no, no, I think you from your dad [*gender differences*], and from
> your side of the family. I think you should be the one that should be doing
> it.

Many participants mentioned that because they are Hmong men, they are expected
to live up to their gender expectations, which is different from if they were Hmong
women.

> On the contrary to Hmong men having gender expectations to carry on the
legacy of their fathers, cultural variation has also taught participants to unlearn
gender expectations. To balance out the equality for both gender, male participants
stated that they advocated for their sisters. Participant 7 stated,

> And I guess also a part of that is I understood my position as a young man
> [*gender differences*], the eldest son [*gender differences*] that I was treated
> differently from my sisters [*gender differences*]. So, at a young age, I knew
> this—and you know, to be honest, I kind of took advantage of that. Like, I
> was like, hey, you know, they're gonna make my sisters [*gender
> differences*] go and like, do all the quote unquote female stuff [*gender*

differences] while I'm over here sitting like a king. So, when I was young, I

kind of like, you know, took that advantage. But as I grew up and

understood, kind of, you know, the kind of things women [*gender*

differences] go through, especially in the Hmong community, I didn't, I

didn't really look into that very much till I graduate college and then started

getting involved in like, you know, these a lot of the feminist movement in

the Hmong women community [*gender differences*], and that's when I

started to realize like, damn, like, you know, I have a voice, why don't I use

that to help them and fight for them? And so, I started doing that started.

When my dad would say, kind of, like sexist [*gender differences*] stuff,

making sexist [*gender differences*] decisions, do stuff that will benefit my

brother and I [*gender differences*] even though my brother's the youngest,

and I'm the oldest, my sister is between, they kind of didn't really benefit

from I guess, the things my dad kind of, you know, the money he made or

like the he bought plot of land, and he would only say, hey, it's for my two

sons [*gender differences*]. And so, especially for his funeral, because I told

him that, you know, I think they have equal opinion on if they want to do

some a certain way they can chime in and they can, I want to include my

sisters [*gender differences*] in the process. And so yeah, it was, you know,

understanding the kind of the struggles, I guess I tried to be the voice.

Participant 7 used his platform as the eldest son with his gender expectation to
advocate and help his sisters have a voice and balance out gender equality. Many
participants unlearned gender expectations and balanced out equality for both
genders in the Hmong community.

Hmong women also unlearned their own gender expectations as they
experienced cultural variation. Traditional Hmong women's gender expectations are
to be obedient, submissive, and humble. This is the norm for many Hmong females,
as it is expected that they behave a certain way based on their gender. Participant 4
recalled,

Growing up, I felt like I had to kind of like, be more like soft-spoken

[*gender differences*] or quiet [*gender differences*]. I mean, that's how I was,

and then once I broke out the shell, is like an alternative. So, I was kind of like very, like, quiet [*gender differences*] and, you know, reserved [*gender differences*] and whatever growing up, and then I think, after a while, like I kind of started to feel like it's okay. To kind of break out and, you know, make friends, you know, and like, build relationships with like, your uncles and your relatives and everything like that [*gender differences*]. So, my values have kind of shifted in that sense.

She stated that because she is a girl, she was expected to be reserved, quiet, and soft-spoken. She also expressed that it was not okay to break out and make friends, build relationship with relatives and uncle, as Hmong girls are expected to cook and clean. As time went by and cultural variation occurred, she stated,

We always chase my mom around everywhere [*gender differences*]. Like we would go to the stores with her all the time. Yeah, that was our relationship with our mom. She didn't she taught us how to cook [*gender differences*] and stuff, but I think she was a very young parent. And she would say okay, we're leaning on you guys. You guys wake up late [*gender differences*]. Yes, we're gonna yell at you guys [*gender differences*]. But you know, we kind of let it slide too. So, you know it was kind of like a mix of that. You know, we had a family of mostly girls, so eight girls and one boy growing up [*gender differences*], you know, like, obviously the younger ones came later. But we had that expectation.

This shows that as her parents acclimated and started learning to balance and unlearn gender expectations, they started to let things slide in the household. Chores such as cooking were no longer an expectation. Many participants also stated that they have specific duties based on gender.

Traditional Values

In an attempt to unlearn gender expectations, participants shared their experiences of how they went against the norms. Many participants mentioned how they would be judged based on their gender and the chores that they did around the house. All participants stated they have experienced dealing with traditional Hmong values. Participant 6 shared,

Okay in the Hmong household, I was always joked around and called by my parents and my older cousins and aunties that I was the girl of the household [*gender differences*]. As I mentioned earlier, you know, the seven boys in the family the first seven kids and family, we were all boys, right? And, you know, in a traditional [*traditional value*], the typical traditional Hmong family [*traditional values*] and the girls always do everything [*gender differences*]. Yeah, they always say, oh, girl, you should learn how to cook clean [*traditional value*]. You do all that girl stuff, right? So, and that's why they you know, growing up, that's why, dude, I remember washing dishes when I was eight, but my mom and dad was teaching me Hey, you got to clean this a little better because they're still greasy. This is how you know it's greasy. It's so slippery, so I'm okay, cool. I learned how to cook, you know, and rice when I was nine or 10 [*traditional values*]. You know, I know how to change my younger siblings' diaper when I was 10, 11. And, you know, I, I know how to do baby formula. I know how to feed my siblings. I know how to cook the simple porridge [*traditional values*], you know, for my siblings, you know, when they're of age that they can consume harder food, and I felt like, I felt like that was the norm [*traditional values*]. Because, you know, I felt like, oh, you know, my mom and dad are teaching me how to cook and clean. You know, that's the norm, right? Until I started getting more exposed to you know, you know, I'm a little mature and then I'm like, oh damn, people keep saying oh, that's girl stuff [*traditional values*]. Like, I couldn't clean and so on, you know, I don't change my mind or change baby diapers. So, you know? And then now till now I'm just like, you know, we're talking about a lot of values in our culture [*traditional values*]. And you know what? Our roles are responsibility, whether if it's men among men or a woman at home and I'm just like, I don't I don't see this as an only Hmong woman responsibility [*traditional values*]. It's men too. It's everybody. I wrestle and know how to cook and clean.

The key points shared by Participant 6 showed that traditional values have gender role beliefs, especially when he mentioned others would criticize him for doing a girl's job. It is going against traditional values for a Hmong man to be doing a woman's job. He stated, however, that it is the responsibility of everyone to know how to cook, clean, and take care of others. This shows a shift in his cultural behavior. Participant 7 also stated that he tried to break these cultural behaviors by starting out small at home. He shared,

> You know, you're taught to be equal, treat everyone respect all that [*traditional values*]. But then when you come home, it's kind of like, well, the males or the men in the family have kind of upper hand and the women are supposed to just take whatever they're getting from men in the household [*traditional values*]. And so, it was it was really hard to navigate that personally because, you know, being the first generation, educated in this country, us, you see that oh, treat people how you want to be treated, but then when you go home, it's like, damn, like I see my sister and my mom, they they're treated differently [*traditional values*]. Not just through our family, but you know, out and about, I see other families going through the same thing [*traditional values*]. And then when you try to teach those who kind of hold those conservative Hmong values [*traditional values*], they kind of look at you like, what the heck like why are you fighting for them? And it gets messy, it gets political and I guess that's one of the big things is the differences between me growing up Hmong is there's a lot of this patriarchal beliefs [*traditional values*] and then my education background is oh, you know, women have been fighting for their rights for like, hundreds of years in different countries, they still don't have any rights [*traditional values*], like, you know, and so, it's like, you know, it is you see it, but then it's like, what can I do? And so, I think one of the challenges is, I want to start, like, starting the home and in the values [*traditional values*] is making it known, like, this is what you believe, and this is what, and then hopefully, maybe your peers, maybe you're I don't know about work, but like, just start small. Because if you think about the grand scheme of things,

> it's like dang, like, how can I impact the world but then at the end of the
> day, it's like, well, start small, don't give up and say it's, you will never do
> you're never you're like a drop in the ocean you know.

It is important to start small because change takes time. Many participants also expressed their willingness and attempted to break traditional values. As stated by this participant, it is important to not give up and keep breaking cultural behaviors in order to see change.

Another way to unlearn traditional values is to speak out and fight for your own needs. Participants stated they had to go against Hmong traditional values to get what they desired. Some of these traditional values can be scary to counter, but participants stated they were willing to stand up for what they feel is right. Participant 1 shared,

> There are so many challenges with having to want my own career. Make
> my own money, and then having the other part of the family always telling
> me, I should just stay home and not work [*traditional values*]. And not my
> parents, but my in-laws mostly [*traditional values*]. So, I remember when I
> first started at company 1. Can I say that? Okay, I just started job, my in-
> laws had to leave to work out of state, and they couldn't help me watch my
> kids anymore [*traditional value*]. Between me and my husband, I made
> more money. But they asked me to quit [*traditional value*]. And I said, no,
> why would I quit? He makes less money. So, I fought to work to continue to
> work. And I'm glad I did because they really will just quit when they come
> back and just go find another job. It's not that easy to find another job.
> Doing the same thing with the same school, you can't do it. You can't just
> do that. So, I stayed and then I got my promotion the next year. So, I was
> glad that I did that. Otherwise, if I would just done what they wanted
> [*traditional value*]. I probably wouldn't be here. That is something I gained
> from the American culture [*cultural variation*], how to stand up for myself
> and defend my own interest. That's my experience or how it has impacted
> me. Before, I just do what my parents are told [*respect elder*], cause, cause

as a Hmong daughter [*gender differences*], you are told to do what your

parents say and you know [*traditional value*].

This participant stated that she fought for what she wanted because she knew this

was the right thing to do. She also stated that it would be a challenge for her to find

another job with the same job responsibility and pay. This eventually led to her

promotion. Many other participants echoed that their parents want them to follow

traditional values. At the time, however, participants felt like they need to go

against it. Participant 2 reported,

I think I feel like my reflections of my experience growing up, and maybe,

maybe that boils down to my values and my ideas and ideals. I identify

myself and I just I feel like sometimes my narrative does not always align

with the narratives of those that look like me [*traditional values*]*,* you

know? Or it doesn't align with the narrative that I think people want to hear

from me [*traditional values*].

Participant 4 mentioned that she is different and others judge her based on

traditional values, but because she has a different narrative and experience, she has

to defend her reality. All participants mentioned different struggles dealing with

traditional values.

Many participants stated that they were taught certain values and

expectations based on gender and traditional values. Unlearning what they were

taught as they encountered cultural variation has brought them new opportunities.

By unlearning gender expectations, opportunities for both genders were present as

participants stated they followed their hearts and were able to achieve speak out

more often. Another participant stated that she went against the cultural behavior of

women and fought for her chance to stay at her job when she was expected to be a

stay-at-home mom. As participants experience cultural variation, they adapt and

integrate new ways into who they are.

Leadership Trait Preferences

For the third theme, there were a total of 108 data segments making up the

following codes: empathy (27), compassion (23), leading by example (32), and

keeping their words (26). Leadership preference can vary depending on an

individual's experience and upbringing. The participants stated that their leadership preference is more based on their experiences with previous leaders or those whom they perceive as leaders. Many participants mentioned that their ideal leaders should possess traits such as empathy and compassion. Most participants did not mention any physical characteristics as a trait that they prefer in their leaders.

Empathy

Hmong have a long history of mostly male-dominant leadership. Most participants grew up in communities where Hmong have a large representation. Many participants stated they look for leaders who are empathetic. Participants also mentioned that they had been involved with Hmong leaders and leaders who were not Hmong. Participants were then asked about their ideal leader and what characteristics they value in a leader. Participant 4 responded,

> Someone who is empathetic [*empathy*], someone who is kind and cautious, but at the same time, someone that is driven and has strong values that can that are, how would I say someone who is open to different ideas, but still strong in their foundation enough to not be easily swayed, right? So, someone who was loving and caring and all that goodness, but also someone that is focused and driven

Participant 1 also shared a comparable preference as Participant 4. Participant 1 stated,

> My ideal leader would be empathetic [*empathy*]. They want to understand what each person needs [*empathy*] and not, not just give a blanket. I don't know just treat everyone the same when not everyone is the same. Not everyone has the same needs. They would lead with confidence, and they would be humble.

Being empathetic and understanding what followers need seems to be important to participants. Also, being kind and considering others' feelings was also important to all of the participants.

Being empathic means considering other people's feelings. Participants stated that leaders should be able to understand where their followers are coming from. Participant 4 shared the traits of her ideal leader would be:

My ideal leader is somebody who they can like relate to, like they have
qualities of a leader, but also like a follower, right? Like it's almost like
they have been in that place before [*empathy*]. And they're very familiar
and they're very empathetic [*empathy*] to those people.

Participant 6 shared that he also desires similar traits in his leaders and stated,

And I really wanted them to kind of not feel that and so, you know, it's, I
guess, I didn't realize at the time, but I would consider that kind of
leadership and understanding just being sympathetic and having empathy
[*empathy*].

It is important to participants that leaders have to have empathy so they can see
from the follower's perspective. Despite the rich history of male-dominated Hmong
leadership, they all agreed that a leader who is empathetic is their ideal leader.

Compassion

Another leadership trait that participants prefer is compassion. Many
participants stated that leaders must be compassionate in order to understand
others. Participant 4 stated,

My ideal leader. I think my ideal there will be someone that has passion and
compassion [*compassion*].

Participant 5 also shared,

I think that's where that side of, like, desiring a leader that is compassionate
[*compassion*], and kind. But also, I think maybe, I think a lot of who I am
boils down to a lot of who my dad was very driven, very passionate, very,
like, there's an end goal, and you work towards that, and you achieve that in
life.

Participants 3 agree that compassion is a trait she wants in her ideal leader. She
talked about Hmong leaders in the community and mentioned,

As I'm older now I actually wanted to maybe go back to this too, because
we talked about leadership earlier, I talked about some of the Hmong
leaders in my community. And I think, from that side of it, there's a lot of
that compassion [*compassion*] and kindness and, you know, everyone wants
to be equal and fair and, you know, consider it.

This highlights compassion as a leadership trait that participants want in their leader.

Lead by Example

Another theme that emerged from the coding analysis of leadership preference by the participants is leaders who lead by example. Many participants described their ideal leader as someone who is empathetic, compassionate, and serving, but the reoccurring theme is that leaders need to lead by example. Having these leadership traits are important to participants as they shared their experiences of who their ideal leader is. Participant 6 also shared,

> I think a leader is one of the most important traits for me, if I look up to a leader is they lead by example [*lead by example*]. To me, a lot of people mistake bosses or managers as leaders where they just tell you what to do and they kind of point fingers and tell but I think a leader is inclusive. I think they always make sure that those all opinions and all facets of a problem or all facets of whatever they're working on is considered.

Participant 8 was asked who his ideal leader is, and he echoed the same preference by stating,

> Um, my ideal leader will be someone that does what they say they're gonna do [*keep their words*], and someone that leads by example [*lead by example*].

It is evident that these participants viewed an ideal leader as someone who leads by example. Participants shared that when leaders lead by example, it is easier to trust them.

Keeping Their Words

Being a leader means having followers who listen and follow directions. Many participants stated that it is important for leaders to remember what they say and to keep their word. Participants also mentioned that leaders could be trusted more if they remember their promises and fulfill these promises. Participant 5 stated,

> Uh, someone who is able to do what they say they will do [*keep their words*]. You know, someone who keeps their word [*keep their words*] and if

they say they will follow through, they need to follow through. A leader

should keep his words [*keep their words*].

Participant 4 also stated that her ideal leader is someone who is honest and keeps their promises. She stated,

Um, I always thought honesty in leaders are huge. Like, you can't be a

leader if you are lying and just being disrespectful. So, I always value

honestly and someone who can lead. Take care of, take charge and be who,

you say you are to be [*keep your words*]. I still think of that now, it doesn't

change. My job is full of leaders who make me question if I like them or if

they are leaders because they tell you one thing and they go do something

else [*keep their words*]. But, yeah, not a good image or good for people who

think you are a leader.

Participants start losing trust and will stop perceiving an individual as a leader if they do not keep their word. This show that leaders must follow through and do as they say. Many of these examples show participants wanting their leaders to honor their words. This leads to participants also stating that leaders should keep their word.

Cultural Variation Enabled Transformation in Leadership View

For the fourth and last theme, there were a total of 175 data segments making up the following codes: cultural variation (93) and leadership influence (82). Cultural variation occurs when there is more than one culture present. Cultural variation is the differences in people, cultural norms, and behavior that have developed over time due to social learning (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). Many participants stated that the various culture around them influenced them. Different culture provides different contexts and preferences based on the views of the people within the culture. Participants stated that growing up, they viewed leadership from a more traditional perspective. According to the participants, traditional Hmong leadership typically involves Hmong men who know Hmong cultural practices, military leaders, clan leaders, and elders in the community. As they integrated more into the American culture at school and the larger community, their perspectives

started incorporating new views. As these view changes, participants notice a change in their own evaluation of what leadership should look like.

In order to understand the participants' views, participants were asked to describe what they value in the Hmong and American cultures. Many participants stated that they have their own perceptions, and Hmong culture and leadership influenced their views. Participant 7 stated,

> In the Hmong culture, we value Hmong leaders [*leadership influence*]. Being Hmong and being proud of being Hmong is huge [*leadership influence*]. I think my take on a Hmong leader is someone who can you know, my whole theme is like being a voice for those who don't have one. To me, I see other people's definitions of Hmong leaders you know, like the guys with the nice suits on who have like, board or executive roles on all these nonprofit originations [*leadership influence*]. To me, it's leaders are people who, who kind of push for those people who don't have a voice and to try to also be like a mediator like I feel like to me, a mediator [*leadership influence*] and a leader kind of to me are synonymous because mediators kind of sit and be tried to be unbiased [*leadership influence*].

Participant 7 summed it up that he values the Hmong culture because it is inclusive and value individuals who make decisions to benefit the whole community. Many participants stated that the community focus of the Hmong culture influences their leadership view. Participant 8 also echoed the same values, stating,

> I value family, and I see that a little in the American culture [*culture variation*]. Not much. I see everyone for themselves in the American culture [*leadership influence*]. Dog versus dog, where Hmong culture it is everyone against an issue, right [*culture variation*]?

The value they see in the Hmong culture is togetherness and community. Participant 1 agreed,

> I value how close the Hmong community is [*leadership influence*] .... the American culture.... it's just different. You can say it is not the same [*cultural variation*].

These views by the participants highlight the value they see in the Hmong culture.

Cultural variation is the differences in people and cultural norms and behavior that an individual develops over time due to social learning. When individuals develop based on their social learning, their perspective changes. These participants stated that the American culture also contributed to their views. Participant 4 stated,

> But the American culture has also told me to take care of mental health first, and love myself first [*cultural variation*]. And I see boss, leaders, whatever you want to call it, not care that they are the boss [*leadership influence*].
>
> They will still be my friend and play at my level [*cultural variation*].

While the Hmong culture focuses on community and togetherness, the American culture helped Participant 4 focus on herself and took care of her mental health. The integration of both cultures helped shape participants' views by incorporating community and but also valuing self-care.

When participants were asked about their leadership views, many stated that it has changed. Participants compared views from their homes to outside views. Many participants stated that they grew up with a leadership view that reflects their parent's values, such as being a military leader, clan leader, shaman, or an outspoken male elder in the Hmong community who knows Hmong cultural practices. As participants assimilated and were exposed to the American culture, they started to have their own leadership views based on their cultural experience. Participant 5 shared,

> Yeah, view on leadership is, I looked up to my dad [*leadership influence*] because he had the charm. He was charismatic. I think as a leader, you have to be able to communicate [*leadership influence*] in a way and hold yourself to a certain regard where, you know, people can enjoy being around you know, look up to you [*leadership influence*] and want to listen to what you have to say.

As Male Participant 2 started his career, he was exposed to different leadership outside of his home and the Hmong culture. He stated,

> The American culture was integrated [*cultural variation*] into my leadership view [*leadership influence*] when I started working with them more. I

learned what they like and dislike, it is different from home [*cultural variation*], you know, you just realize that what we see in movie is not true. Due to the two cultures that participants grew up in, it is possible that the Hmong and American cultures have the most influence. As participants grew in their childhood and now in their careers, the collaboration of two cultures is present in all participants.

As Hmong Americans, the Hmong culture and American culture play a critical role in the participants' cultural variation experience. Many participants stated that their leadership view is a collaborative effort from both the American and Hmong culture. Participant 2 stated that having more exposure to the American culture and being married to a different race changed her leadership view. When asked how she has integrated American culture and Hmong culture into her leadership view, she stated,

> Interesting question. I think, you know, as a kid, I didn't think or know much. But as I learn and discover myself, when my friends who show me something more American [*cultural variation*] than what I am used to, I just think. Hey, what if I can be more like that. Like, the way I talked and like I said, the way I carry myself [*leadership influence*]. I have integrated my past trauma [*leadership influence*], and my love [*leadership influence*], and my growth [*leadership influence*], scars [*leadership influence*], everything into my leadership view. I learn that leadership is not about who you are, but what you do. The American culture [*culture variation*] judge you on what you know, where the Hmong culture [*cultural variation*] judge you on how you look. Like, my dad looks presentable, so he is right away a leader [*leadership influence*]. but in the American culture [*cultural variation*], I learned that they accept you [*cultural variation*], for the most part right, right. Not everywhere but again, they accept you based on your credentials and skills [*cultural variation*]. You are good, good enough to be who you are as a leader regardless of being in a wheelchair, or with no parents and orphan, orphan like, just me [*cultural variation*]. It taught me and my leadership view that I have to go beyond the surface [*leadership influence*].

By learning from her past trauma, love, and scars, her leadership view embraces all of her past experiences; however, she integrated the American culture of being judged based on what one knows with the Hmong culture, which is more appearance constructed. Participant 3 continued,

> So, to short it, sort of say I have integrated [*cultural variation*] the openness of American culture [*leadership influence*] and the focus on being who you are, where the Hmong culture is more about where you came from [*leadership influence*]. I learned to accept leaders of more diverse views [*cultural variation*]. I learn to see a bigger picture because my family is diverse [*cultural variation*].

This showed the combination of two cultures and formed her own view based on her experience. As participants assimilate, their views shift and incorporate both cultures.

As the Hmong assimilate more into the American culture, many participants notice the blend of the two cultures. Participants stated that their view on leadership is different now compared to their upbringing. Participant 1 stated,

> Okay, so as a child, I have very few role models that looked like me growing up [*leadership influence*]. There were two sisters that graduated college, and this was the late 80s so almost unheard of [*cultural variation*]. And I looked up to them as leaders like I want to be like them when they when I grow up [*leadership influence*]. I want to I want to wear that cap and gown [*education*]. They are leading the way. They are so outspoken [*cultural variation*]. They're so beautiful. You know as far as physical wise, they were modern [*cultural variation*]. They knew how to do their hair and makeup. And in the 80s, Hmong people didn't really know any of that [*culture variation*]. So that was what I perceived as a child growing up [*leadership influence*]. Now I, of course, I'm older now. So, a lot of the leaders that I look up to are also older than me [*leadership influence*]. And it just all changes because now, it's not how they look or how beautiful they are, in words, it's about what have they done [*cultural variation*], and then in in their life, to benefit the community to benefit their families for

themselves, even how they carry themselves [*leadership influence*] how

they maintain their positions [*cultural variation*].

She stated that in the 1980s, Hmong people did not know how to do hair and make-up, so when she saw her role models who knew how to take care of themselves, she idolized them as her role models. As she is older now, however, her leadership view changed from appearance to the hard work that leaders put in. Participants stated that they had a shift in view as they were exposed more to the American culture, and their perspectives changed.

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 3 stated that her leadership view has also changed. She stated that her view on leadership was based on what her dad wanted her to be, and she did not have a specific view of her own. She explained,

I think I think as a kid, I don't know if I really had an idea of leadership

[*leadership influence*], right? Like I am, I did not have people who were in

leadership roles [*leadership influence*]. But I think as a kid, I just wanted to

do well. I just wanted to be that doctor that my dad wanted me to be

[*leadership influence*]. I just wanted to get good grades and go to college

[*education*] one day. I never really had that desire of like, I'm gonna be in

this position where I'm leading a group of people or even looking at it as,

oh, I can't wait till this and this person can be in our community doing this

and this thing for us.

Participant 2 mentioned that the Hmong culture and his upbringing did have an influence on his leadership view:

I think the Hmong culture did change me [*cultural variation*], or have used

it into my leadership view [*leadership influence*] because that's what I

enjoyed the most when I meet new leaders in this day and age is to, first off,

he or she has to grab my attention with her, you know, personality

[*leadership influence*], you have to get your attention first. And then um, in

addition to that, they have to know what they're talking about [*leadership

influence*], and they have to know what they're doing. Growing up, and even

now, I just feel like the Hmong leaders I know, know what they are talking

about [*leadership influence*]. They need to know because everyone is ready

to see if they know. So, I guess you can say, um, you know, the Hmong

culture helped shaped [*cultural variation*] my leadership view [*leadership*

influence] by holding people in high position on a different level, they need

to know their stuff.

The effect of the Hmong culture was noted in many of the participant's

experiences. The social learning of the American culture helped changes their

perspective into a new leadership view. Participant 6 stated that he learned

something new by working outside of his culture:

I'm just saying like we gotta be a little optimistic [*leadership influence*].

And I think, I don't think the Hmong leaders think like that they're not open

minded to try new things or they're just narrow on like, my way the

highway sometimes, you know [*cultural variation*]? But you know, that's

one thing that I think among my peers to myself that I kind of see

differently [*cultural variation*] is that they're not optimistic. They're not,

you know, open minded about things and willing to try new things [*cultural*

variation], right. Yeah. Or what's that word? Vulnerable [*leadership*

influence]. Yeah, that's a good word. So, yea, I learn to be vulnerable

[*leadership influence*] as I learn more about the other culture, every culture

that has been around me [*cultural variation*].

With that conversation and experience, it is evident that participants incorporate

both cultures and use cultural variation to learn and develop their own views on

leadership. Words such as vulnerable and optimistic are distinctive to the cultural

variation between Hmong traditional leadership values and U.S. leadership values,

as vulnerability is not a common trait in traditional Hmong leadership.

Summary

In this chapter, four main themes were significant from the interviews

gathered from the eight participants. The four main themes were (a) navigating

household expectations and socioeconomic challenges, (b) unlearning gender

expectations and traditional values, (c) leadership trait preferences, and (d) cultural

variation enabled transformation in leadership view. The themes were derived from

11 codes based on 681 data segments during the qualitative analysis. The themes

and findings help establish a more in-depth perspective on cultural variation and Hmong men's and women's leadership perspectives. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings, implications, recommendations, and conclusion of this study.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The purpose of the current research study was to examine leadership prototypes and cultural variation amongst working professional Hmong men and women in Minnesota. There is a need for research regarding leadership prototypes and cultural variation for Hmong men and women from a leadership perspective in Minnesota, as little literature is available. Using a phenomenological approach with in-person interviews, I captured the lived experiences of eight Hmong men and women in Minnesota. Their experiences and rich perspectives contributed to the overall study. This chapter contains a discussion of the findings, practical and theoretical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were answered from the interview data that I collected. The interview questions were formulated based on the research questions. The interview questions consisted of 10 main questions with probing questions to clarify and better understand. After the interviews and data analysis, the findings were used to answer the research questions. The context of this study was leadership prototype and cultural variation. The findings indicated that Hmong men and women who are working professionals experienced cultural variation and influenced their leadership prototype. In the following sections, I present the answers to the four research questions in this study.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "What are the lived experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota?" This question was designed to examine the experience of Hmong men and women and what they have experienced in their upbringing until now. Based on the data collected from the in-person interviews, Hmong men and women experienced many household expectations and challenges as they lived in Minnesota. The household expectations and challenges are evident in the theme "Navigating household expectations and socioeconomic challenges." Within this theme, the codes are respecting your elders, education, and socioeconomic

challenges. The data showed that participants expect to respect their elders, be educated, and overcome socioeconomic challenges. These experiences influenced how the participants view their upbringing and life in Minnesota.

The participants were asked about their household, upbringing, and relations with their parents and siblings during the interview. They were also asked about the experience of growing up as a Hmong person living in Minnesota. Based on this interview question, the findings show that respect is essential in a Hmong household. Respecting the elders is also an expectation growing up as Hmong men and women. This is consistent with existing literature stating that respect is vital in the Hmong community, and elders are highly respected (DeSantiago, 2020). One piece of literature discusses how Hmong elders were integrated into family medical discussions as a sign of respect (Baisch et al., 2008). Many participants stated that one way of showing respect is to involve their parents and elders in the community to make decisions. By showing respect to their elders, Hmong men, and women are accustomed to showing respect and learning how to be followers. The expectation of respecting one's elders created a unique experience for Hmong men and women and can contribute to formality and compliance in the workplace. One way is how they view leadership by being good followers; however, Hmong working professionals may also be able to model how to stand firm without being disrespectful, as they were taught to show to elders. Participants stated that although they disagree with their manager, they would not embarrass their manager in a meeting and instead would voice their concerns personally.

The second emergence from the interview questions is education. Hmong parents expect their children to be educated and attend college from a young age. Many participants stated that education is essential in Hmong households and shaped their upbringings. This connects to the research question, as Hmong men and women in Minnesota's lived experiences revolve around attaining a high education and doing well in school. All participants are college graduates, and it shows that the value of education in their household has translated into all graduating from college. Hmong men and women in this study navigated the expectations of education by accomplishing the expectations put upon them by

their parents. The literature showed an education gap between Hmong students and other Southeast Asian students (Xiong, 2012). This explains the expectation of obtaining a higher education, as Hmong parents want a better life for their children. Hmong men and women in Minnesota in this study expected to be educated and obtain a college degree.

When the current study participants were asked about their experience growing up as a Hmong person living in Minnesota, all participants mentioned socioeconomic challenges. Socioeconomic challenges emerged, as many participants stated that they grew up in poverty and low-income neighborhoods. Facing socioeconomic challenges emerged from the data as a driving factor to change the perspectives and goals of the participants. The research literature supports that Hmong faced many socioeconomic challenges in the United States as immigrants. In 1990, 74% of Hmong households had an income below the federal poverty level and held the lowest socioeconomic status of all ethnic groups in Minnesota (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). Many participants stated that they lacked financial resources and relied on public assistance. The findings from the data show that participants were aware of their struggles and navigated the socioeconomic challenge to create better opportunities for themselves. This also shows that Hmong men and women are resilient and adaptable to their situations. Growing up with socioeconomic challenges impacted the experience of Hmong men and women in Minnesota.

The expectations of Hmong men and women influenced their experience of growing up and living in Minnesota. The first expectation is to respect their elders. These expectations of respecting their elders shaped the experiences of these participants as they formed respect and values for their elders. Solheim and Yang (2010) stated that respecting the elders in the Hmong community is essential, creating conflict for the younger generation as they adapt to the complex U.S. upbringing. The data showed that respecting the elders was an expectation in the home and the community. The second expectation of achieving a good education also changed the experience of these participants. Xiong (2012) stated that education for children is a primary focus in Hmong households. Many participants

stated expectations to get good grades, attain a high educational level, and succeed. Lastly, participants stated that their experience in Minnesota included growing up in poverty and low-income neighborhoods. Vang (2012) stated that from 1990 until 2000, the Hmong population in Minnesota had a low employment rate, and 43% of Hmong men worked in the manufacturing industry. Many participants also stated that one of the socioeconomic challenges was a single-parent working household, as their mother was a stay-at-home mom. Theme 1, navigating household expectations and socioeconomic challenges, answered Research Question 1. The findings from this study are consistent with previous research indicating that high home expectations and socioeconomic challenges are present for Hmong men and women (Gloria et al., 2017; Her & Gloria, 2016; Xiong, 2007; Yang, 2012).

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "How have Hmong men and women in Minnesota experienced cultural variation?" This question examined how Hmong men and women experience cultural variation. Cultural variation is the differences between people and cultural norms and behavior developed over time due to social learning (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). Based on the data collected, Hmong men and women experienced cultural variation in many forms. Many participants stated that their parents lack education and know minimal English; however, participants also stated that they have strong traditional values at home. Theme 2 reflects the experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota and cultural variation. The theme is "Unlearning gender expectations and traditional values." Two of the data's most dominant cultural variation factors are gender differences and traditional values. These cultural variations are experienced through Hmong participants every life of being in the American and Hmong culture.

The participants were asked to discuss their challenges living in the Hmong and American cultures and how they experience cultural variation. The findings showed that living in two cultures simultaneously created many opportunities for participants to experience cultural variation—specifically, unlearning gender differences and traditional values. This allowed participants to unlearn patterns that may be customary in the Hmong culture but not common in the American culture.

This is consistent with the literature, as many scholars have indicated gender inequality and favoritism toward Hmong men (Lor et al., 2017; Min & Kim, 2002). An example is giving Hmong men more opportunities to succeed than Hmong women, as traditional Hmong culture limits Hmong women's roles outside of the home. Cultural variation influenced the creation of opportunities for Hmong women due to more equal opportunities for Hmong women to advance. Additionally, equal opportunity for both genders can create challenges, as the difference in gender equality in the Hmong community is immense. Participants mentioned having to fight for what they want as Hmong women. Many Hmong men noticed the gender inequality and stood up for their sisters. As cultural variation happens through social learning of both cultures, the participants can unlearn traditional values to acclimate to the American culture. Hmong men and women must use cultural variation to continue to grow and unlearn unhealthy gender differences and traditional values to acclimate and create a healthier culture to be inclusive.

Gender differences and traditional values are present in the data, showing how participants experienced cultural variation. This was present in the data, as participants stated that the gender roles at home differ from the gender roles in the American culture. Thao (2020) stated that Hmong responsibilities are often split by gender, as Hmong women oversee household duties while Hmong men are the provider, often working outside of the home. Many participants stated that gender roles must be unlearned as they experience cultural variation and want equal opportunities. Second, traditional values at home are different from the American culture. Many participants stated that cultural variation helps them change and modify traditional values to create a more functional culture. Cultural variation happens to participants through school, work, in the community, and as they spend more time just interacting with people outside of their culture. Thao (2020) stated that young Hmong adults are experiencing the United States values and belief system, which clashes with their parents' traditional values and practices. Participants stated that they went against traditional values by moving away to college and adopting new values. The data in Theme 2, unlearning gender

expectations and traditional values, answered Research Question 2 Findings from this study are consistent with previous research indicating that some cultural challenges and variations for the Hmong people are gender roles and holding on to traditional values (Donnelly, 1997; Lee, 2001).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "What characteristics do Hmong women and men in Minnesota value in leadership?" This third question examined what Hmong men and women value in their leaders. Based on the data collected, Hmong men and women prefer empathetic, compassionate leaders who lead by example and keep their word. Many participants stated that they want their leaders to understand what they are going through, keep their promises, and lead by example. Theme 3, leadership trait preferences, reflects the characteristics of Hmong men and women and what they value in leadership. The characteristics mentioned by participants answered Research Question 3 by explaining what characteristics Hmong men and women value in leadership.

Data from the research suggested that empathy, compassion, leading by example, and keeping their word are the most valued leadership characteristics of Hmong men and women in Minnesota. Based on previous literature, Hmong leadership mainly focuses on male leaders (Lee & Tapp, 2010; Lor & Yang, 2012). Yang (2013) stated that Hmong American leadership changed considerably since the 1990s as Hmong women started holding leadership positions in the United States. The view on leadership expanded and included a more diverse desire in Hmong leadership. This study indicated that the Hmong participants desire leaders who show empathy and compassion, lead by example, and keep their word. Although this study differs from historical literature on Hmong leaders, the recent Hmong leader literature is starting to include more diverse leadership views and characteristics (Lor, 2013). Research can be expanded by looking from a more modern lens into Hmong leadership in America.

When looking back at the literature, Tatman (2004) stated that the clan system is the traditional leadership system of the Hmong and uses it as a governing system. Moua (2001) stated that the clan system only included Hmong men, and

women were excluded from decision-making. Based on the literature on leadership prototype, it includes an individual's cognitive representation and expectation of attributes in a leader and is shaped by environment and culture (Johnson et al., 2008). Due to the Hmong clan system only including Hmong men, there needs to be more representation of Hmong women when looking at Hmong leadership prototypes. The data from this study suggested that masculine traits were not preferred over other traits. The participants in this study preferred traits in the ideal leader: empathy, compassion, leading by example, and keeping their word. Although historic literature did not include Hmong women as leadership examples, the current data from this study did not exclude Hmong women. The data also suggested that the clan system is no longer the focal point when Hmong men and women look at leadership prototypes, as it was mentioned as minimally. Data from Theme 3, leadership trait preferences, answered Research Question 2. The characteristics that Hmong women and men in Minnesota value are empathy, compassion, leading by example, and keeping their word.

The relevance of Research Question 2 can contribute to the post-General Vang Pao leadership era. General Vang Pao was the Hmong's leader during the Vietnam War, that helped relocate the Hmong to the United States after the fallout of the war and continued to lead the Hmong in America (McCall, 1999). General Vang Pao was the last officially recognized Hmong leader (Yang, 2012). Lor and Yang (2012) stated that since the death of General Vang Pao, it is unclear what the Hmong are looking for in their next leader. Although there are uncertainties regarding who the next Hmong leader should be in America, this study can serve as a stepping-stone in determining the leadership trait preferences of the next Hmong leader.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "How have cultural variations affected the values that Hmong men and women in Minnesota have about leadership?" This question was designed to examine the effect of cultural variation on Hmong men and women and their values about leadership. Based on the findings in this study, cultural variation affected all participants and their values regarding leadership.

Theme 4, cultural variation enabled transformation in leadership view, assisted in showing that cultural variation affected Hmong men's and women's leadership values. Two of the codes from the theme are cultural variation and leadership influence. Many participants stated that their values regarding leadership were influenced by cultural variation. Many participants stated that their values have transformed and changed by incorporating the American culture into their Hmong cultural values. Participants stated that there were values that they still kept from the Hmong culture, but they have found new perspectives of viewing it. The findings show that Hmong men's and women's values on leadership are affected by cultural variation. Participants stated that strong Hmong males, typically their father and clan leaders, were the ideal leadership prototype in their earlier upbringings. Their values have shifted due to immersion in U.S. culture. Participants' leadership preferences shifted from strong Hmong male leaders to more inclusive of women and other leadership traits, such as empathy, compassion, leading by example, and keeping their word.

The literature shows that historically, Hmong leaders have changed over time based on their environment and need. When the Hmong were in China, they favored warlord leadership due to the constant war with the Chinese government (Cha, 2013). Yang (2001) stated that the Hmong people's leadership is based on the different cultures and regions during their migration. This shows that the different cultures and environments impacted how Hmong view who their leader should be by. The research finding also suggested that cultural variation also changed the view of leadership prototypes for the participants. Connecting back to historical literature, the Hmong are no longer at war, so a warlord leadership style is no longer preferred. In addition, if the leadership prototype is an individual's cognitive representation and expectation of attributes that a leader should have, it makes sense that the Hmong leadership prototype is in America. Due to new environments and cultures in America, Hmong men and women's cognitive representation and expectations have changed regarding what attributes leaders should possess. The leadership prototype has shifted from Hmong being a warlord, brave, strong, and masculine clan leader to a more accepting leadership prototype that includes

empathetic, compassionate leaders who lead by example and keep their word. In 30 years, the leadership prototype of Hmong men and women will change due to cultural variation, as the culture at that time may be different from this study. The finding in this research is consistent with the literature that cultural variation influences leadership prototypes.

The experiences shared by the participants stated that their values transformed over time as they experienced cultural variation; for example, some participants valued brave, assertive Hmong leadership but eventually shifted to appreciate leaders who are more empathetic, compassionate, and follow through on their promises. Participants were asked what they value in the Hmong culture that they also see in the American culture. In response, many participants stated that although there is value in the Hmong culture that they also see in the American culture, integrating both cultures helped them develop a new perspective. Some values affected by cultural variation are views on gender roles and family dynamics, such as lower power distance between parents and children and being more vulnerable. Cultural variation affected these values by allowing participants to compare and contrast their values to how they want to be treated. One participant stated that she had to fight to keep her job because she was expected to stay home and care for the children; however, as she learned from cultural variation, she needs to stand up for what she wants. This is consistent with research indicating that Hmong Americans slowly adapt and change their values (Ngo & Lor, 2013; Thao, 2017; Yang, 1997). This is important because as Hmong Americans adapt to American culture, there is a shift in how Hmong Americans view leadership. Additionally, the interview data revealed that cultural variation helped transform how participants viewed leadership, which had shifted from when they were younger. The shift in leadership prototype can create different needs, wants, and principles of what Hmong men and women look for in a leader. Theme 4 answered Research Question 4.

Implications

This research study was conducted to explore leadership prototypes and cultural variation. The researcher aimed to capture the experiences of Hmong men

and women working professionals living in Minnesota. After concluding the study, I have identified several implications based on the findings. For practical implications, the findings indicated that Hmong men and women working professionals between the ages of 28 and 45 experienced cultural variation and influenced their leadership prototype. For theoretical implications, the findings indicated that their cultural surroundings influence the leadership prototype of Hmong men and women.

Practical Implications

This study has increased the understanding of cultural variation and the context of leadership prototypes for Hmong men and women between the ages of 28 and 45 in Minnesota. Participants mentioned that their upbringings are critical to what they value. One of the challenges is gender differences in a Hmong household. Many participants mentioned different roles that must be fulfilled based on gender. Yang (2022) stated that female roles are limited to the inside of the home, such as cooking, cleaning, and attending school. As a result, Hmong communities should be encouraged to focus on gender equality and expand expectations to both genders, inside and outside the home if they decide to embrace change to traditional Hmong values. Hmong parents who still practice household expectations based on gender can benefit from this study by hearing the participant's experiences and struggles in fulfilling those gender expectations. One participant stated that her only way out of her parent's house is to move out for college after high school. It may be beneficial for Hmong parents to be more aware of their children's struggles if they prefer Hmong values while living in the United States.

Secondly, another practical implication is that this study can help Hmong organizations and nonprofits grow in finding a leader to help lead the Hmong followers. The data from this study show that Hmong men's and women's leadership prototype is affected by cultural variation. The need to evaluate Hmong followers and employees is critical, as culture is constantly changing; thus, the needs for leaders may also change. When organizations are looking for a leader to lead Hmong employees and followers, the data from this study can help find a

candidate that fits the needs of Hmong followers. Some crucial traits that Hmong organizations can look for in leaders to lead Hmong organizations should include empathy, compassion, leading by example, and keeping their word. Participants did not appear to acknowledge physical traits in leaders. When organizations seek a leader to lead Hmong followers, they focus on empathy, compassion, leading by example, and keeping one's word. Having a leader with traits that Hmong men and women prefer will be a good foundation for growth and collaboration.

Third, the findings from this study support the need for a more balanced study that includes participants who are not working professionals or hold a college degree. There is an urgent need for researchers to explore further leadership prototypes and cultural variation for those who do not hold a college degree to understand the needs of all Hmong people. Based on my findings, education was a crucial expectation in the participant's household. All of my participants also hold a college degree. This impacted the leadership prototype due to these individuals' valuing education and education being an expectation throughout their life. Exploring the leadership prototypes of Hmong individuals who are not working professionals may be essential. There are many other job industries that Hmong people in St. Paul and the Minneapolis area partake in. Vang (2012) stated that 43% of the Hmong workforce in early 2000 was in the manufacturing industry. With the high manufacturing workforce within the Hmong community, these data can be used to help manufacturing companies who employ Hmong employees also to accommodate and find leaders who will fit their leadership prototype. With a different sample population, the views on leadership prototypes and cultural variation may be different. Researchers can expand this study to include a broader population. The current study provided a foundation to expand more on leadership prototypes in the Hmong community.

Theoretical Implications

The results from this study suggest multiple theoretical implications. First, the leadership prototype theory looks at perception based on an individual's cognitive representation of how they perceive the characteristics, traits, qualities, and images (Lord et al., 2001). These characteristics, traits, qualities, and images

are influenced by an individual's environment, beliefs, parents, and culture (Epitropaki et al., 2017). In this study, I examined how an individual's leadership prototype may change over time, influenced by cultural variation. The findings suggest that a holistic understanding of an individual is needed when looking at an individual leadership prototype. For example, the upbringing and experiences of an individual, along with the different cultures the individual is associated with, can influence their leadership prototype. In addition, as time changes and the individual adapt to the new cultural values, their view of an ideal leader is also likely to change to fit their needs. This study added to the literature by including experiences of what changed and how it changed as individuals experienced a new culture. Expansion to the theory can also be found by looking at individuals who disassociate from a participant's culture, beliefs, or environment.

The second theoretical implication is regarding cultural variation. The results of the current study imply that cultural variation affects how individuals view leadership. Cultural variation indicates the differences between people and cultural norms and behaviors developed over time due to social learning (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). Cultural variation can happen at the group or individual level (Leung & Cohen, 2011). At the group level, all participants mentioned that living in the Hmong and American culture affects their cultural identity and values as they have to adapt and change how they interact with people at school versus their parents at home. Some participants stated differences between themselves and other Hmong peers at the individual level. This indicated that although participants are from the same Hmong culture, there are also variations. One participant lost her father at an early age, which played into her cultural variation, as she experienced Hmong culture differently after her father's death. Many Hmong participants stated that their narratives might differ from the typical Hmong story in America. This captures the theory of cultural variation as individuals identify these differences in cultural norms and behavior, and over time, they develop their variation based on social learning. Expanding cultural variation may be possible by adding more studies on subcultures and subgroups, specifically for underrepresented groups.

The third theoretical implication is based on Hofstede's cultural dimension. The framework includes power distance, collectivist vs. individualistic, uncertainty avoidance, femininity versus masculinity, and short-term versus long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1993). Based on the study's data, the findings captured this theory well. One participant stated that she was not allowed to sit in the front seat of her father's vehicle because that was a sign of disrespect. This shows a high-power distance. Participants also stated having a more collectivist culture growing up, such as prioritizing what is best for the family over individual success. Uncertain avoidance was mentioned by one participant stating that uncertainties of pursuing videography due to lack of making money forced him to pursue a career in information technology. Femininity versus masculinity was mentioned multiple time and was a code, as participants stated they were treated based on their gender, such as moving out of the house, making funeral decisions, and carrying on the family legacy. Short-term versus long-term orientation was also mentioned by the participants stating that they were more short-term focused, as their parents were low income and planning for the future was not talked about much. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory can be expanded by having more studies similar to this one, including individuals in more than one culture. Individuals in two or more cultures may have different perspectives and not identify or experience the four dimensions. Also, individuals in dual culture may need help understanding what perspective they should view the four dimensions of Hofstede's theory. Further research can be done to help bridge the gap between the four cultural dimensions and their impact on individuals who may not associate predominantly with one culture.

Lastly, this study contributes to the overall literature available on Hmong leadership. The scholarly literature focuses on education leaders, healthcare leaders, and traditional Hmong leadership (Thao, 1997; Vang, 2020; Xiong, 2012). This study is comprehensive because it includes a broad perspective on leadership overall. It does not focus on one specific leadership field. The results of this study can contribute on many levels as it can be used at the organizational, individual, and cultural levels to look at what Hmong individuals want in their leaders. This

study is also unique because the participants were from the most densely populated Hmong geographic area. In addition, the study looks at an individual's experience in totality and how leadership perspective may have shifted from adolescence to adulthood. Similarly, Saechao-Elizalde (2014) examined Hmong transitioning from traditional cultural roles into leadership positions, but this was done in Tulare County in California. The contributions of this study to Hmong leadership literature can be on many levels.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were encountered in this research study. First, the location of these participants was limited as all participants are from the Minneapolis and St. Paul area in Minnesota. Many of these participants stated that they grew up in predominantly Hmong communities. Future researchers could explore Hmong participants from somewhere other than the Minneapolis and St. Paul locations. Also, the Minneapolis and St. Paul locations are large urban regions considered politically progressive. Participants living in smaller towns or rural areas may have a different experience and influence on the study. Secondly, the participants interviewed are all between the age of 28 and 45. Many participants mentioned growing up in a traditional household with traditional values at home. Hmong working professionals outside of this age group were not represented. Thirdly, the sample of this study only included participants with a college degree who are also working professionals. Although this study focused on working professionals and participants with a college degree, a study that includes noncollege and college degree professionals may produce different perspectives. Fourthly, this is a phenomenological study where participants were interviewed in person. Most of these interviews occurred at the participant's home or a reserved room in a public library. The timing and location of the interviews impacted the participant's response or comfort level with sharing personal experiences. Lastly, many interview questions asked about the personal experience of family dynamics and early childhood upbringings. Some participants may have felt uncomfortable sharing this information with a random researcher.

Regarding how participants were uncomfortable sharing personal details about their upbringing and family dynamics, two ways may assist. One of the ways is to have an initial meet and greet first to set the mood and to go over the study and interview questions. Having a first initial meet-up with participants makes participants feel connected and trust the researcher (Merry et al., 2011). Another way to get more personal information from participants is to inform them of the expectations of the interview. Ataro (2020) mentioned that informing the participants in advance that they need to express their feelings regarding a challenging issue will help prepare them individually for the questions. These two methods help participants to be more open and share more personal information.

Suggestions for Future Research

Leadership prototype and cultural variation is a broad topic and covers many areas. Although the findings of this study contributed new perspectives to the literature on Hmong leadership prototypes and cultural variation, there are some suggestions for future research. The Hmong people are a new immigrant group to the United States. and have faced many challenges since they arrived as refugees. The Hmong are also scattered across the United States, where each region may have its unique cultural variation influenced by regional differences. Future research is suggested in three key areas to increase understanding of Hmong men and women and their leadership prototype: location of the participants, age of the participants, and educational background of the participants.

The first suggestion for future research is to expand the geographical location of the participants. All participants in this study live in Minnesota, specifically the Minneapolis and St. Paul area. Including participants in different parts of the United States may provide different perspectives on their leadership prototypes and cultural variation. Secondly, future researchers may look at a different age group. This study included participants who are 28 to 45 years of age and may have a false recollection of their upbringings and experiences, as it was 20 or more years ago. Also, individuals in different age groups may experience cultural variation as the era they grew up in may differ. The last suggestion for future research is to look at the Hmong population overall and not have an

educational background requirement. The sample of this study included only individuals who have a college degree. Including a more diverse sample or a larger sample size to include individuals with and without a college degree may provide different perspectives regarding their leadership prototype.

Personal Reflection

Conducting this study on my own Hmong people is momentous in various ways. First, I learned so much about my people that I did not know initially. The Hmong people's history, culture, and traditions made me appreciate my roots and the richness of our past. Secondly, each interview with the eight participants moved me in many ways. The personal stories of their challenging upbringings and the success they enjoy now as adults indicate the progress we have made as a community. Lastly, the four themes discovered in the data made me reflect on my experience of cultural variation and how that has impacted my perspective on leadership and life. It was incredibly special to me that the participants were willing to share their delicate stories and cultural struggles with a stranger. I greatly appreciate them, as they have contributed to my study and knowledge of my own Hmong people. One lesson that I have learned from this is that although we may live in the same culture, we all have different perspectives. Thank you all!

Summary

In conclusion, leadership prototypes and cultural variation need to be expanded to have a more comprehensive understanding of what Hmong men and women in Minnesota look for in a leader. Throughout this study, the lived experiences of Hmong men and women were used to determine if cultural variation influenced their leadership prototypes. The data show that all four research questions were answered based on findings and themes from the interview data. Data also show that cultural variation does influence an individual's leadership prototype as it changes over time. Practical implications show that Hmong leaders, organizations, and communities need to leverage this study to understand how to provide a leader that fits the need of Hmong men and women in Minnesota. Theoretical implications include leadership prototype, cultural variation, Hofstede's

cultural dimensions, and contributing to Hmong scholarly literature. Although there are limitations in this study, suggestions for future research included recruiting participants from different geographic locations, in varied age groups, and of diverse educational backgrounds. The current study improved the understanding of Hmong men and women and their leadership prototypes.

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Appendix A

Invitation Email

SUBJECT: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study: Leadership Prototypes and Cultural Variations amongst Hmong Men and Women Working Professionals in Minnesota

Dear [Insert Name],

My name is Ying K. Yang, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Organizational Leadership at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. I am writing to ask for your assistance in participating in my dissertation research study about the lived experiences of professional Hmong women and men in the Twin Cities regarding their leadership prototype and cultural variation. I seek to understand how cultural variation influences Hmong women and men and how it may have affected their leadership prototype. You were chosen and receiving this invitation because you meet the following qualifications:

• Identify as Hmong
• College degree
• Working professional
• Between the age of 28 and 45
• Live in the Twin Cities in Minnesota

Participation in this study will include up to one in-person interview, which will be audio-recorded. An additional interview may be needed but subjective based on need. Each interview will take place for 60 minutes and focus on your lived experiences as working professional Hmong women and men leaders in the Twin Cities. Data collected from your interview will inform the findings of my dissertation study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose to end your participation in this study at any given time.

If you would like to participate in this study, please reply to this email, and relevant forms will be sent to you for completion. For any questions, please email me at ykyang@seu.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Ying K. Yang
Ph.D. Candidate
Southeastern University

Appendix B

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research interview on (enter date).

You were chosen for the interview because you are Hmong, a working professional between the age of 28 and 45, reside in Minnesota, and can provide information and experiences regarding leadership prototypes and cultural variation. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the interview.

This interview will be conducted by a researcher named Ying K. Yang, also a Ph.D. candidate at Southeastern University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this interview is to gain valuable and personal narratives regarding the participant's lived experiences with leadership prototypes and cultural variation amongst Hmong in Minnesota.

Procedures:
If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview lasting approximately 60 minutes with the researcher, Ying K. Yang.

Voluntary Nature of the Interview:
Your participation in this interview is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the interview. No one at Southeastern University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the interview. If you decide to join the interview now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Interview:
There is the minimal risk of psychological stress during this interview. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. There are no benefits to you from participating in this interview. The interviewer will benefit by practicing interviewing skills.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this interview project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the interview.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher's name is Ying K. Yang. The researcher's dissertation chair is Dr. Joshua Henson. You may ask any questions you have now or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at ykyang@seu.edu or the dissertation chair at jdhenson@seu.edu. If you want to communicate privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Jennifer Carter, the Chair of the Southeastern University Ph.D./DSL programs, at jlcarter@seu.edu.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

☐ I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the interview.

Printed Name of

Participant

_____

Participant's Written

Signature

_____

Researcher's Written   Ying K Yang

Signature

_____

Appendix C

Confirmation Email Meeting

SUBJECT: Confirmation regarding your meeting with Ying K. Yang

Dear [Insert Name],

I appreciate your patience in finding a time to meet with me regarding Leadership prototypes and cultural variations amongst Hmong men and women working professionals in Minnesota. This email confirms our agreed-upon time, date, and location for our in-person interview. Below is the following information regarding our meeting:

• Date -
• Time -
• Location –

Again, thanks for your participation in this study. I will also send out a friendly reminder text on the day of the meeting. If you have any questions, please email me at ykyang@seu.edu or call/text me at 651-274-3515.

Thank you very much!

Ying K. Yang
Ph.D. Candidate
Southeastern University

Appendix D

Thank-You Email

SUBJECT: Thank You!

Dear [Insert Name],

Thank you so much for your time participating in my study regarding Leadership prototypes and cultural variations amongst Hmong men and women working professionals in Minnesota. Your time and contribution are greatly appreciated. If additional meetings are needed, I will contact you directly. All audio recordings from our interview will be made available upon request. If you have any questions regarding this interview or the overall study, please feel free to contact me.

Again, thanks for your participation in this study. If you have any questions, please email me at ykyang@seu.edu or call/text me at 651-274-3515.

Thank you very much!

Ying K. Yang
Ph.D. Candidate
Southeastern University

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Introduce myself and the purpose of the study, and obtain consent before recording.

Once again, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me today. My name is Ying K. Yang, and I will be conducting the interview today for my dissertation study on the experiences of working professional Hmong men and women in Minnesota regarding leadership prototypes and cultural variation. I seek information on the experiences and perceptions of working professional Hmong men or women living in Minnesota and their leadership prototypes and cultural variation. The interview process platform is designed to allow the sharing of stories and experiences to help me better understand this subject. I plan for this interview to be around 60 minutes. At any time, you may terminate this interview, and please feel free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Do I have your consent for this study, and may I start the audio recording?

Research Question:

1. What are the lived experiences of Hmong men and women in Minnesota?

2. How have Hmong men and women in Minnesota experienced cultural variation?

3. What characteristics do Hmong women and men in Minnesota value in leadership?

4. How have cultural variations affected the values that Hmong men and women in Minnesota have about leadership?

Questions on Demographics
Name
Birth year
Marital status
Occupation
Country of origin
Year of arrival to the US
Birthplace of parents
Ethnicity of parents
Self-identified ethnic group
Educational profile
        - Highest education obtained
        - Field of Study

Number of Children (if any)
Religion

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your household and upbringing.
   a. Family dynamics and relationships
2. What is your experience growing up as a Hmong person living in Minnesota?
   a. What are some of your values?
   b. Does that differ from any of your other Hmong peers?
3. Tell me about some challenges you experience living in both the Hmong and American cultures.
4. The definition of cultural variation is the differences in people and cultural norms and behavior that have developed over time due to social learning. How have you experienced cultural variation?
   a. What have you learned from living in more than one culture?
5. Who is your ideal leader?
   a. What are some characteristics that you value in a leader?
      i. Physical traits and behavior/mental traits
6. Can you describe your perception of leadership growing up and your perception of leadership now?
7. What has influenced your perceptions of leadership?
8. What are some things you value in the Hmong culture that you also see in the American culture?
9. Again, cultural variation is the differences in people and cultural norms and behavior that have developed over time due to social learning. How has cultural variation affected your view on leadership?
10. In what ways have you integrated the American culture and Hmong culture into your leadership view?

Thank you again for your participation in this interview. I appreciate your time and honest answers to all the interview questions. If you have any follow-up questions regarding this study or any follow-up questions about what I am going to do with this information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you again!

End of meeting

Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter

SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE:	December 16, 2022
TO:	Ying Kong Yang, Joshua Henson
FROM:	SEU IRB
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Leadership Prototypes and Cultural Variations amongst Hmong Men and Women Working Professionals in Minnesota
FUNDING SOURCE:	NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	22 BE 19
APPROVAL PERIOD:	Approval Date: December 16, 2022 Expiration Date: December 15, 2023

Dear Investigator(s),

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled, Leadership Prototypes and Cultural Variations amongst Hmong Men and Women Working Professionals in Minnesota. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol pending the following update:

- Please add IRB contact information to the informed consent.

Any changes require approval before they can be implemented as part of your study. If your study requires any changes, the proposed modifications will need to be submitted in the form of an amendment request to the IRB to include the following:

> Description of proposed revisions;
> *If applicable,* any new or revised materials;
> *If applicable,* updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions

If there are any adverse events and/or any unanticipated problems during your study, you must notify the IRB within 24 hours of the event or problem.

At present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

This approval is issued under Southeastern University's Federal Wide Assurance 00006943 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the IRB's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Rustin Lloyd
Chair, Institutional Review Board
irb@seu.edu