

The Hmong Archives as a Community Resource for Social Studies Educators in Saint Paul, Minnesota

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Abstract

In this community-based participatory research article the authors bring attention to the Hmong Archives, a community asset in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The authors describe the Hmong Archives and how it has been used by K–12 teachers and college professors in a culturally sustaining manner. The authors argue that by focusing on the Hmong population, their article makes a significant contribution to culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies; specifically how the Hmong Archives embodies an unofficial and/or unconventional social studies space, a space for students of color to obtain learning opportunities outside the social studies classroom.

Keywords: Social Studies Education; Culturally Relevant Pedagogy; Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy; Multicultural Education; Hmong Archives; Hmong Americans

Introduction

Social studies education has been found to be anglocentric (Hartlep &

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Scott, 2016; Jones, Pang, & Rodriguez, 2001; Suh, An, & Forest, 2015) and exclusionary when it comes to including the history of Asian Americans (An, 2016). There is also a need for more scholarship on how social studies teachers teach about Asian Americans (*cf.* Pang, 2006; Pang & Evans, 1995). Consequently, this article focuses on Hmong Americans, part of the Asian American community. Particularly, this article draws attention to the Hmong Archives, a community asset in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Study Setting

The setting of this community-based participatory study was Saint Paul, Minnesota. Readers may not know it, but Saint Paul has the largest Hmong population per capita in the United States (10.0%; 28,591 Hmong Americans). In this article we examine the Hmong Archives (formerly the Hmong Nationality Archives), a nonprofit organization located in Saint Paul. According to Marlin L. Heise (2010), the “Hmong Archives was chartered on February 10, 1999, as a nonprofit with the mission to research, collect, preserve, interpret, and disseminate materials in all formats about or by Hmong” (p. 45). The Hmong Archives was founded by Yuepheng L. Xiong (founder of Hmong ABC bookstore¹), Tzianeng Vang (founder of Hmong Professional Network), and other Hmong professionals, as well as Steve Trimble and Marlin L. Heise.

Brian V. Xiong (co-author of this article) has been an early supporter and board member of the Hmong Archives. The Hmong Archives has grown in six Saint Paul, Minnesota, locations. It was first housed at Metropolitan State University (where Nicholas D. Hartlep, co-author of this article works), next it relocated to a Hmong business strip in the “Minnehaha Mall,” in 2001, and then again later to Concordia University. In May 2008 it moved above the ABC Bookstore at 298½ University Avenue West, Saint Paul, Minnesota, and then it moved to 343 Michigan Street, where it stayed from 2010 to 2015. In 2015 it relocated to the East Side Freedom Library (ESFL) at 1105 Greenbrier Street, where at the time of writing this article, it remains.

Study Purpose

In this article we explain our rationale for why we believe the Hmong Archives is an important Social Studies resource that provides “culturally sustaining knowledge” to students of color, namely the Hmong. Drawing on the concepts of “cultural relevance” (Ladson-Billings, 2014) and “cultural sustenance” (Paris & Alim, 2014, 2016), we offer evidence why the Hmong Archives should be viewed as a community asset and a

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“space of cultural sustenance” (Paris, 2017, p. 7) to be used by teachers who practice Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP). We also discuss how K–12 teachers and college professors have used this Social Studies asset (e.g., field trips) as a part of their “culturally sustaining” practice.

Our article shares what Patricia Leavy (2017) labels a *community-based participatory study* because we formed “research partnerships with nonacademic stakeholders to develop and execute a research project based on a particular community-identified problem or issue” (p. 224). We report our findings within the context of K–12 Social Studies teacher practice, and via the prism that learning opportunities should be provided to students outside the traditional or conventional social studies classroom. In our article we share photographs of artifacts that visitors will see when they visit the Hmong Archives as well as participants who have visited the Hmong Archives at the ESFL. We also share narrative data that comes from email correspondences with the Hmong Archives Board and educators, K–12 and higher education, who have taken their students to the Hmong Archives.

Cultural Relevance and Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Scholarship documents the important role “culturally relevant” pedagogy plays when it comes to Social Studies teaching and learning (cf., Crowe & Cuenca, 2016). One example is Ladson-Billings (2014) who identifies why she chose to study African American students when developing CRP: “When I originally began searching for research on successfully educating African American students, I found nothing” (p. 76). Our community-based participatory study contributes to the literature on CSP because like Ladson-Billings (2014) who found nothing on successful teaching of African Americans, the same was true for us when we looked for research on the teaching of Asian/Americans (e.g., the Hmong).

Below we begin by providing an overview of what Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy is and its application to the Hmong Archives. Next we share why we believe the Hmong Archives is an example of a community asset. We draw broadly on Yosso’s (2005) Cultural Wealth Model, beginning from Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez’s (1992) conceptualization of “funds of knowledge,” we offer context and justification to our rationale that the Hmong Archives is a community asset. Specifically, we argue that it is important that Social Studies teachers provide learning opportunities outside of the social studies classroom that sustain the history, cultural, and linguistic heritage of their Hmong students. We share key demographics of the diverse Hmong population in Saint Paul.

We share our methodology and data and conclude our article by sharing how the Hmong Archives can be used by practitioners in the field of education.

What is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy?

According to Paris (2012), “The term *culturally sustaining* requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (p. 95, italics original). Paris and Alim (2014) ask, “What are we seeking to sustain?” In the case of this article, we are seeking to sustain the history, culture, and language of the Hmong people. Historical, cultural, and linguistic reclamation begins with social studies education because Hmong people cannot learn what they are not taught or told; the mainstream K–12 Social Studies curricula render the Hmong invisible, and their narratives are largely absent (*c.f.* Hartlep, 2017). The large Hmong population in Saint Paul requires that K–12 teachers be knowledgeable of their curriculum, instruction, and pedagogy. The Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) understands the importance and value culturally sustaining curriculum is for teachers, which is why they created the Absent Narratives Resource Collection—a repository of open-access, ready-to-use materials created by MHC and its partners (see Hartlep, 2017). The MHC Collection includes K–12 learning materials that sustain the language, knowledge, and culture of Somali, Hmong, and American Indian people (Minnesota Humanities Center, 2017).

Citing the work of Szpara and Ahmad (2007), Jimenez-Silva and Luevanos (2017) write, “Social studies curriculum is inherently culture specific. The perspectives and worldviews presented in social studies textbooks may be vastly different than the perspectives from their own cultural and educational backgrounds” (p. 85). But while Social Studies curriculum has a perspective, curriculum can lie through omission. If Hmong are not contained in Social Studies curriculum, then that’s a major problem. In Hartlep’s co-authored (Hartlep & Scott, 2016) book *Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide: From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority* it was determined that Hmong do not appear in K–12 Social Studies textbooks. Students are being lied to because the Hmong are being omitted in student textbooks.

Hmong Archives as a “Community Asset”

The Hmong Archives is an unofficial and unconventional Social Studies space. Research has found that K–12 social studies textbooks are sinophobic (see Hartlep & Scott, 2016). We know nationally there is a low amount of teachers of color, including Asian/Americans (see Toldson, 2011). Without carrying out a systematic analysis, estimating the number of Hmong PK–12 teachers in Minnesota region or nation would be difficult. For instance, at the time of writing this article there was a total of 262 teachers in the Saint Paul Public School (SPPS) District that listed “Asian” as their ethnicity (S. Nissen, personal communication, October 10, 2017). Because SPPS, only tracks “Asian” in its demographic information, not specifically Hmong, disaggregating specific subpopulations is impossible. Besides, “Asian” is a limiting category in of itself because “Asian” is broad; who is Asian and who is Asian/American?² According to an analysis done by Toldson (2011), there are 18,588 preschool and kindergarten, 73,096 elementary and middle, 16,950 secondary, and 5,605 special education teachers who are Asian and female. This amounts to a total of 114,209 total Asian female teachers. There are 641 preschool and kindergarten, 17,408 elementary and middle, 8,220 secondary, and 1,288 special education teachers who are Asian and male. This amounts to a total of 27,557 total Asian male teachers. While Toldson’s (2011) article is six years old, and does not disaggregate Asian subgroups, it paints a picture that there is a shortage of Asian/American PK–12 teachers (this by definition includes Hmong teachers).

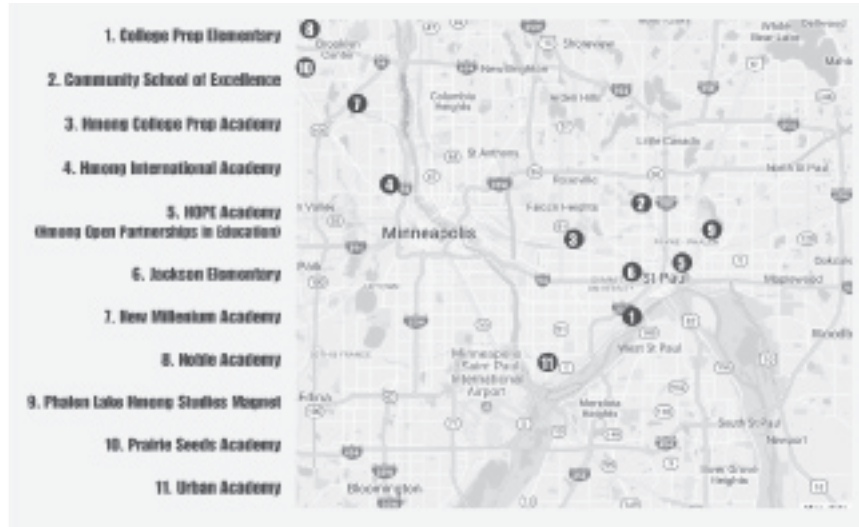
Pao Lor (2010) provides a snapshot on the number of Hmong teachers in Wisconsin. According to Lor (2010), in 2006 there were approximately 100 Hmong PK–12 teachers in Wisconsin. Because, no one has completed a similar estimation as Lor (2010), the number of PK–12 in-service Hmong teachers in Minnesota has been unknown.

These grim and uncertain national and regional statistics speak to the small number of Hmong teachers in Minnesota (MnEEP, 2015), but also partially explains the reason that in Minnesota there are so many Hmong K–12 Charter Schools. According to the *Asian American Business Directory and Community Resource Guide* (Yang, 2018, p. 34) and our own investigations, there are eleven (11) Hmong Charter and focused- schools in Minnesota (see Fig. 1), while there are fourteen (14) in the United States (*cf.* Hartlep & Ellis, 2015, p. 348).

Figure 1

A Map of All 11 Hmong Charter and Dual-Immersion Schools in Minnesota

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11 Hmong Charter and Dual-Immersion Schools in Minnesota

1. College Prep Elementary

355 Randolph Avenue, Suite 3000
Saint Paul, MN 55102
<http://www.cpe-k6.org>

2. Community School of Excellence

270 Larpenteur Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55113
<http://www.csemn.org>

3. Hmong College Prep Academy

1515 Brewster Street
Saint Paul, MN 55108
<http://hcpak12.org>

4. Hmong International Academy

1501 N. 30th Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55411
<http://hia.mpls.k12.mn.us>

5. HOPE (Hmong Open Partnerships in Education) Academy

720 Payne Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55130
<http://www.hope-school.org>

6. Jackson Elementary

437 Edmund Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55103
<https://www.spps.org/Domain/48>

7. New Millenium Academy

5105 Brooklyn Boulevard
Brooklyn Center, MN 55429
<http://www.newmillenniumacademy.org>

8. Noble Academy

9477 Decatur Drive North
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445
<http://www.nobleacademy.us>

9. Phalen Lake Hmong Studies Magnet

1089 Cypress Street
Saint Paul, MN 55106
<https://www.spps.org/Domain/57>

10. Prairie Seeds Academy

6200 West Broadway Avenue North
Brooklyn Park, MN 55428
<http://ww2.psak12.org/>

11. Urban Academy

1668 Montreal Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55116
<http://www.urbanacademymn.org>

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3 Hmong Charter and Dual-Immersion Schools in Other States

California

1. Yav Pem Suab Academy^a

7555 S Land Park Drive
Sacramento, CA 95831
<https://www.ypsacharter.org>

2. Susan B. Anthony Elementary School

7864 Detroit Boulevard
Sacramento, CA 95832
<http://www.cnusd.k12.ca.us/Domain/451>

Wisconsin

**1. Hmong American Peace Academy
(HAPA)^b**

4601 North 84th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53225
<http://www.myhapa.org>

^a First school to offer Hmong Dual Language Program in California.

^b First Hmong charter school in Wisconsin.

Hmong Charter Schools

Frequently Hmong Charter Schools are created because it allows them to hire Hmong teachers and be in charge of the curriculum, more than non-charter schools. Autonomy, control of their own curriculum, and being able to offer Hmong/English bilingual and bicultural classes are incentives that are difficult to overlook. Ultimately, providing learning opportunities outside of the Social Studies classroom that sustain the history, language, and culture of Hmong students is a primary objective of CSP. The two widely known models of community assets are Tara J. Yosso's (2005) Cultural Capital Framework, and Luis C. Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma Gonzalez's (1992) Funds of Knowledge Framework.

Tara J. Yosso's Cultural Capital Framework

Tara J. Yosso's (2005) Cultural Capital Framework forwards six interrelated forms of capital: (1) aspirational capital, (2) linguistic capital, (3) social capital, (4) navigational capital, (5) familial capital, and (6) resistant capital. *Aspirational capital* "refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). *Linguistic capital* "includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 78). *Social capital* refers to "networks of people and community resources" (p. 79). Navigational capital refers to "skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80). *Familial capital* refers to "those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (p. 79). Lastly, *resistant capital* refers to "knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80).

From a community asset perspective, of the six types of capital she

identified, the Hmong Archives offers *familial capital* and knowledge to its visitors. The Hmong Archives possesses artifacts that when examined and used as teaching tools, can provide and sustain the familial knowledges that the Hmong community carries. Remembering the past is important for moving in the future.

Luis C. Moll et al.'s Funds of Knowledge Framework

Luis C. Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma Gonzalez's (1992) "funds of knowledge" framework, according to Google Scholar, has been cited by 5,022 scholars. Moll et al.'s seminal work developed into a book, *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms* (see Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). In 2009, Moll delivered the Sixth Annual Brown Lecture, a highly prestigious, invited lecture organized by the American Educational Research Association (AERA). In his lecture entitled "Mobilizing Culture, Language, and Educational Practices: Fulfilling the Promises of *Mendez* and *Brown*" Moll referred to and defined funds of knowledge as "knowledge and other resources found in households and other settings that result from families' lived experiences and practices."³

According to Upadhyay (2009), "funds of knowledge also refers to historical and cultural knowledge, strategies, resources, and treaties of a community" (p. 218). Upadhyay's case study of a Hmong female teacher named Lee, utilized Hmong funds of knowledge when describing how she taught science to Hmong students in an empowering way. Upadhyay had this to say about funds of knowledge and culturally relevant pedagogy:

For Lee, empowering Hmong students by establishing the connection between science and their funds of knowledge is an important goal as an elementary teacher. Lee's experience tells her that many Hmong students, unlike other stereotypical Asian students, leave science by the time they reach high school. For many Hmong students, science seemed to be disempowering because they failed in science and "couldn't see how science was useful to their future goals." Many Hmong students in mainstream classrooms feel ignored by "white teachers because those teachers lack cultural and social knowledge" about Hmong students and their poor social and academic standing in the U.S. Lee's commitment to inclusive science teaching and supporting Hmong parents and students to engage in science learning generated empowering experiences and actions. (pp. 227–228)

Hmong History

In a traditional Hmong family, children are often told that the Hmong history is like a broken mirror because it is not exactly known where Hmong ancestors came from and it is near impossible to go back in time

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to put all the shattered pieces together to figure out the roots of Hmong ancestry (Xiong, 2017). Nevertheless, many Hmong and non-Hmong scholars (Quincy, 1995; Ranard, 2004; Lee, 1998; Yang, 2002; Vue, 2008; Lee & Pfeifer, 2012; Chang, 2004), report that the Hmong had lived in China for thousands of years, where the Chinese would call them the “Miao,” or classified them as the “Miao” group, which includes Hmong, Kho Xiong, Hmu, and A Hmao (Chang, 2004; Lee & Pfeifer, 2012). Hmong usually lived peacefully and independently in the mountains where they engaged in farming, gathering, and hunting. During this time, the majority of Hmong were animists and believed in shamanism. More specifically, their belief was that all living things have souls and spirits, and that all things in the world are interconnected. Therefore, the Hmong preferred to avoid war with anyone and worked toward living in peace within their family and villages. Given that the Hmong were a minority group in China, the Chinese sought to control the Hmong land and wanted the Hmong people to assimilate and live under Chinese rule. However, the Hmong people stood their ground and fought against this oppression. Chang (2004) has indicated that the Hmong and expanding Chinese were at war with one another for more than 3,000 years until the Chinese defeated the last Hmong uprising in 1870. After losing the war, some of the Hmong then escaped southward to Southeast Asia and joined the earlier settlements in the remote highlands of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

Except for Pa Chay’s Madman’s War in 1918–1921 (Quincy, 2000, p. 41), the Hmong did not encounter any more war after they escaped from China, until the Vietnam War, known as the “Secret War” to the Hmong, between 1963 and 1975 (Lee & Pfeifer, 2012). According to Chang (2004), “in 1959, a fight broke out between units of the Royal Laotian Army and Pathet Lao forces, plunging Laos into civil war” (p. 9). In support of non-communists and the Laotian Army’s efforts in not losing the country into the hands of the Pathet Lao, the United States supplied the Royalists with arms and personnel (Quincy, 1995). It was during this time that the Hmong were recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to gather information about the North Vietnamese movements in the country. Later under the leadership of Hmong officer, Major General Vang Pao, the Hmong were used in rescuing downed American pilots, cutting off supplies to the communists on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, flying combat missions, and fighting the ground war (Chang, 2004; Ranard, 2004; Lee & Pfeifer, 2012).

When the United States withdrew from the Vietnam War in May 1975, the communists gained complete control of Laos. It was during this month that Major General Vang Pao was evacuated by air to Thailand while thousands of Hmong were left behind. The Hmong people became the target of violent reprisals from the new government. Fearing for

their lives and to save their families, tens of thousands of Hmong fled across the Mekong River to seek refuge in Thailand in Ban Vinai and other refugee camps (Cha, 2010). It was estimated that around 30,000 to 40,000 Hmong died during the Vietnam War (Lee & Pfeifer, 2012).

After waiting in Thai refugee camps, the Hmong people received refugee status from the United Nations and were allowed to relocate to other countries, especially the United States, France, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and West Germany. The majority of Hmong people were settled in the United States, with the largest settlements in the “San Joaquin Valley of California (71,244), Minnesota (49,200), Wisconsin (38,949), Michigan (8,686), North Carolina (8,451), Colorado (3,875), Georgia (3,407), Washington (3,050), Oregon (2,729), and Florida (1,856)” (Lee & Pfeifer, 2007, p. 15).

The Hmong Regional and National Populations

As was mentioned early in this article, nationally, Saint Paul has the largest Hmong population per capita in the United States (10.0%; 28,591 Hmong Americans). Based upon the 2010 U.S. Census presented in Figure 2, the top-ten Minnesota Hmong Populations by Community are as follows from largest to smallest: (1) Saint Paul (29,662), (2) Minneapolis (7,512), (3) Brooklyn Park (5,151), (4) Brooklyn Center (3,170), (5) Maplewood (2,152), (6) Oakdale (1,524), (7) Woodbury (1,103), (8) Blaine (950), (9) Cottage Grove (890), and (10) Coon Rapids (765). Because regionally, Minnesota has such a high concentration of Hmong people, it is beneficial that the city of Saint Paul has a community asset such as the Hmong Archives. As Paris (2017) points out, working in spaces such as “community organizations, arts programs, and schools that are home to majority Black, Latina/o, Indigenous, and Asian American and Pacific Islander communities” is in fact part and parcel to cultural sustaining practices.

Methodology

Patricia Leavy (2017), in her book *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* offers a description of a “community-based participatory research (CBPR)” method to carrying out research. She writes, a CBPR method to research “involves forming research partnerships with nonacademic stakeholders to develop and execute a research project based on a particular community-identified problem or issue” (p. 224). Leavy (2017) goes on to write that “CBPR values

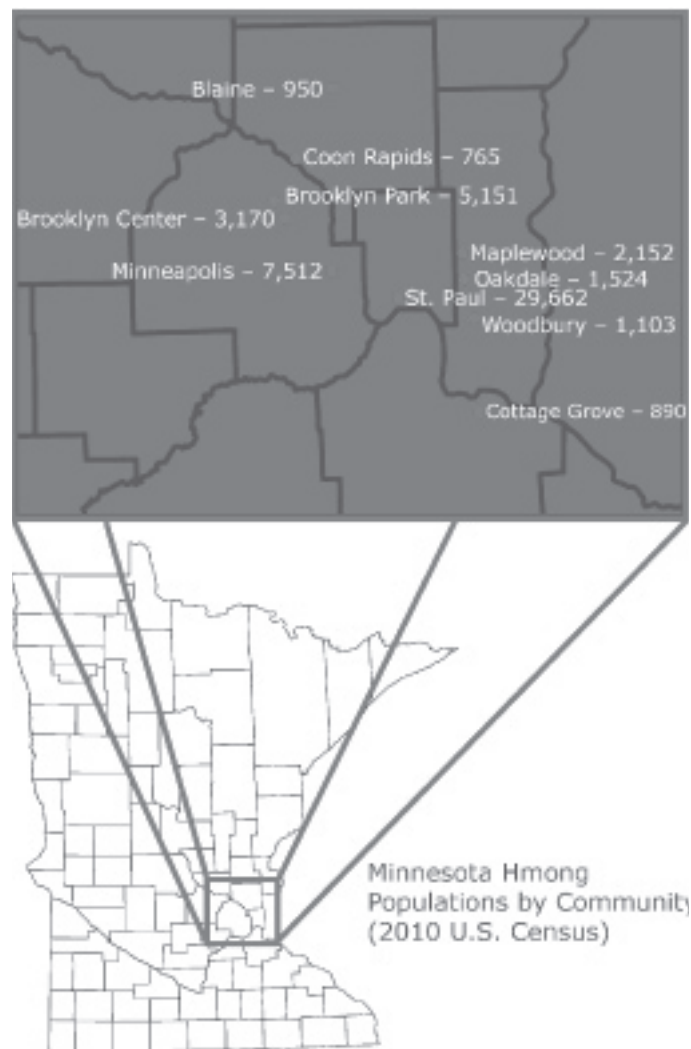
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collaboration, power sharing, and different kinds of knowledge (scientific, lay, experiential). CBPR develops projects from the ground up, with those whose lives are most impacted by the problem at hand, in an effort to create needed change” (p. 224). She points out an important distinction that many methods textbooks overlook: the CBPR should not necessarily

Figure 2

Minnesota’s Top 10 Cities With the Largest Hmong Communities

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be labeled a qualitative method because quantitative data may be used in its approach, which is the case in the present CBPR study that examines the Hmong Archives. We share what data we analyze in this article in the following section.

Data

Brian V. Xiong obtained the records of visitors to the Hmong Archives. As stated earlier, the Hmong Archives began in 1999. Table 1 shows the number of visitors. One limitation of the data presented in Table 1 is that it was recorded by paper and pencil. As shared earlier, the Hmong Archives has moved locations six times in its history. The Hmong Archives staff is purely volunteer. The Hmong Archives is a labor of love of a small group of committed Hmong and non-Hmong people. When Brian V. Xiong and Marlin L. Heise retrieved the data that appears in Table 1, they collectively had to comb through the Hmong Archives guestbooks, and manually count the number of visitors who usually only gave name and date. This process was daunting and took many hours for them to do, which led them to approach visitors differently. They recreated their sign in system to include items such as the number of visitors, the date of the visit, the name of the visitor(s), the institution or affiliation of the guest, and the email/contact information of the visitor(s).

Table 2 shares the home states or countries of visitors who registered after 2008. What the data in Table 2 illustrates is that the Hmong Archives impacts more than the region of Saint Paul, but also nationally and internationally.

Table 3 shares a sample of K–12 schools who have visited the Hmong Archives. It is estimated that 300+ K–12 students have been to the Archives.

Table 4 shares the number of visitors from colleges or universities. 400+ college/university visitors have been to the Hmong Archives, and this number continues to grow each day.

Table 5 lists colleges and universities from outside the U.S. that have visited the Hmong Archives.

Table 1

Number of Visitors by Year to the Hmong Archives

| Year | # of Visitors |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1999–2010 | 4,156 |
| 2011–2017 | 540 |
| Total: | 4,696 |

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Table 2

Number of Visitors from 2008 from States and / or Countries to the Hmong Archives

| State | # of Visitors |
|------------------|---------------|
| Minnesota (MN) | 846 |
| Wisconsin (WI) | 160 |
| California (CA) | 51 |
| All other states | 80 |
| Total | 1,137 |

| Country | # of Visitors |
|----------------|---------------|
| Canada | 4 |
| China | 9 |
| France | 4 |
| Germany | 1 |
| Japan | 11 |
| Laos | 2 |
| Myanmar | 1 |
| Netherlands | 7 |
| Norway | 1 |
| Portugal | 2 |
| Thailand | 8 |
| United Kingdom | 2 |
| Total | 52 |

Table 3

K-12 Schools That Have Visited the Hmong Archives

Community of Peace Academy School
Community School of Excellence
Como Park High School
Harding High School
Highland Park High School
Hmong College Prep Academy
Hmong International Academy School
HOPE Community Academy
Hubbs Education Center, GED
Jackson Elementary School
Johnson High School
New Millennium Academy School
Patrick Henry High School
Phalen Lake Elementary School
Saint Paul Public Schools
Washington Magnet School
(The list is in alphabetical order)

Table 4

U.S. Colleges/Universities that have visited the Hmong Archives

Anoka-Ramsey Community College
Augsburg College
Bethel University
Carleton College
Century College
College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University
Gustavus Adolphus College
Hamline University
Hennepin Technical College
Inver Hills Community College
Metropolitan State University
Minneapolis Community and Technical College
Minnesota State Community and Technical College
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Normandale Community College
North Hennepin Community College
Saint Cloud State University
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Saint Olaf College
Saint Thomas University
Southwest Minnesota State University
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota, Duluth
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
University of Wisconsin-Madison
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
University of Wisconsin-Stout
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Winona State University
(The list is in alphabetical order)

Table 5

Colleges/Universities Outside of the U.S. That Have Visited the Hmong Archives

Chiang Mai University
University of Leiden
University of Oslo
University of Passau
Universities in Kyoto & Osaka, Japan
Universities in Kunming, Guiyang, Changsha & Hainan, China
Queen's University, Belfast

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Photographical Data

Leavy (2017) states that “CBPR is meant to produce public scholarship that is useful in one or more settings, and in one or more social or political conversations” (p. 244). She also states that CBPR is concerned with how research partners are brought into the interpretation process. The photographic data that is shared here was shown to Marlin L. Heise for his approval. What appears in Figs. 3–12 is not the original images that we had selected. Heise provided feedback into which pictures we would include. Considerations were made about who was in each photograph, the years the photo was taken, and the quality of the photograph to be included. These conversations happened in face-to-face meetings at a local coffee shop in Saint Paul, via text message, and via email. Discussions were also had how the problem that was undertaken was an important one for the Hmong community and also for the Hmong Archives to devote time and attention to. A copy of this article will most certainly become part of the Hmong Archives Collection.

Figure 3

East Side Freedom Library and Hmong Archives, 1105 Greenbrier Street

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, October 2, 2017



Figure 4

*Minnesota State University, Mankato Hmong Students
Attending Hmong Archives, 343 Michigan Street*

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, July 13, 2011



Figure 5

*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Students Learning
about the Hmong Archives, 343 Michigan Street*

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, April 17, 2015



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Figure 6

Group of Professors Visiting the Hmong Archives, 343 Michigan Street

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, March 9, 2015



Figure 7

K-12 Students Visiting the Hmong Archives, 1105 Greenbrier Street

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, 2017



Figure 8

Community Members Visiting the Hmong Archives, 1105 Greenbrier Street

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, July 24, 2017



Figure 9

Hmong Archives at Concordia University

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, February 9, 2008



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Figure 10

Open House at Minnehaha Mall

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, August 27, 2003



Figure 11

Open House Ceremony

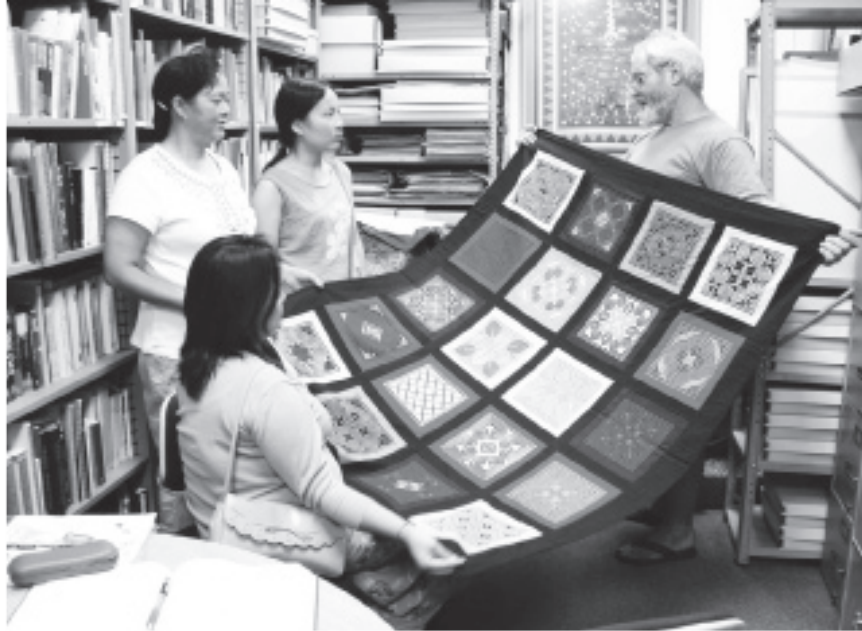
Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, August 19, 2003



Figure 12

Paj Ntaub Display at Open House Ceremony

Photo Credit: Brian V. Xiong, August 27, 2003



Narrative Data

Two sets of narrative data were generated. The first set came from email correspondence with K–12 teachers and higher education professors who had visited the Hmong Archives. These individuals responded to the following semi-structured probes:

1. When and how did you come to learn about Hmong Archives?
2. What class did you bring to Hmong Archives?
3. What was the purpose for bringing your students to the Hmong Archives?
4. If applicable, why do you continue to return to the Hmong Archives?
5. How can the Hmong Archives be used to supplement student learning?
6. What do you think your students take away from visiting the Hmong Archives?

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The second set of narrative data came from email correspondence with the Hmong Archives Board. These individuals responded to the following probes:

1. When and how did you become involved in the Hmong Archives?
2. How would you describe the goals of the Hmong Archives, and how has it grown or changed over time?
3. What are your goals for the Hmong Archives for the next three to five years? What priorities will help you achieve them? What barriers are in your way?
4. How can the Hmong Archives and its collections be used to supplement student learning (for both K–12 and higher education)?

In the section that follows we share these two sets of data. First we share the K–12 Educators data. One Hmong female (Teacher A), Hmong for Native Speaker High School Teacher and one White male (Teacher B) High School Social Studies Teacher responded. Next, we share the data from the six Hmong Archives Board members (Board Members A–F).

K–12 Educators

1. When and how did you come to learn about Hmong Archives?

Teacher A: I learned about the Hmong Archives through a student at the U, doing her doctorate. Jenna Cushing-Luebner connected me to the Hmong Archives this past August because she learned I was teaching a brand new Hmong for Native Speakers course.

Teacher B: 1998-was on the advisory board at the very beginning of the inception to formally organize.

2. What class did you bring to Hmong Archives?

Teacher A: I would love to bring my Hmong students, but because we are so far in distance, it may be difficult to. Maybe in the summer, I can bring a small group of high school students to study?

Teacher B: Have sent some students to HA over the years, U.S. History, secondary grade 11.

3. What was the purpose for bringing your students to the Hmong Archives?

Teacher A: Bringing the students to Hmong Archives would mean research of the Hmong people and their culture and history. We would love access to the plentiful of resources that exists at the Archives.

Teacher B: Access primary sources, learn more about Hmong Culture and History

4. If applicable, why do you continue to return to the Hmong Archives?

Teacher A: If I'm not able to find the info I need to educate my students elsewhere, I am hopeful that will the collection of Hmong materials that exists at the Archives, I will find what I need.

Teacher B: It is a great resource and asset to students and anyone in the community interested in learning more about Hmong Culture

5. How can the Hmong Archives be used to supplement student learning?

Teacher A: I believe it would be beneficial to have resources stored electronically online, so others can access the materials from anywhere.

Teacher B: Access to documents, provide more about absent narratives when studying topics such as U.S. History-Immigration, and Vietnam War, to name a few areas. Also adds a perspective when educators are working with communities that may undergo or have undergone trauma.

6. What do you think your students take away from visiting the Hmong Archives?

Teacher A: My students would appreciate the resources that exists for our community. It would deepen their knowledge and bring enthusiasm to learning more about who they are.

Teacher B: I think that there is a history of Hmong in America, that opportunities exist to access primary documents and other artifacts related to Hmong, and that there is value in taking time to explore and learn more about one's culture or others cultures too.

Hmong Archives Board Members

1. When and how did you become involved in the Hmong Archives?

Board Member A: Dr. Brian V. Xiong introduced me to the Hmong Archives back in early August, 2017. I learned more about the Archives through the "Paj Ntaub" event hosted by the Board of the Hmong Archives at the East Side Freedom Library. I later get involved as a board member and a community volunteer to help with the Archives' collection of objects and preserving the Hmong cultures.

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Board Member B: I got involved with the Archives back in 2003. At that time I was taking a course in Museum Anthropology at Hamline University. As part of my course, students were required to take part in some volunteer work with a museum or museum related institution. A friend of mine who also attending Hamline at the time suggested I check out the Hmong Archives, and so I did. I met with Marlin Heise and we discussed some projects that I can work on for my class. Since then I've been involved with the organization.

Board Member C: My first step was to work with Hmong student Chia Thao in May 1981 at Minnesota Historical Society, followed by trips to Ban Vinai in 1982 to stay with his relatives, and meeting Yuepheng Xiong during his internship in 1994. In March 1998 I returned from my first trip to Laos and discovered two opportunities, early retirement (June 30), and Yuepheng's meeting at Foodsmart (late summer) to establish a Hmong history/cultural nonprofit with the help of Professor/Representative Steve Trimble's state grant. I now had some useful experience, free time, and thousands of Hmong items that I wanted to go to such a research center.

Board Member D: In 2015, I was introduced to the Hmong Archives by Dr. Brian Xiong due to my passion and knowledge of the Hmong culture and traditional practice. When I first visited the Archives, I realized that it has so many arts and crafts, DVD and VHS movies that I used to watch during my childhood years, and books and scholarly researches of Hmong all over the world. I was so amazed by the committee members of the Hmong Archives, especially Marlin L. Heise who willingly turned his house into an Archives and opened to the public. After knowing that the Hmong Archives has all the essence of Hmong for the younger and future generations, I decided to join to continue the great work that the committee members have already been doing long before me.

Board Member E: I was one of the original co-founders of the Archives in 1998. The idea of Hmong collections, then, was just a project under the Asia-Development Organization (ADO). It was named Hmong Nationalities Archives. We thought that the income generated from the use of the collections would be allocated toward Hmong projects in Asia. However, we soon learned that foundations were interested in supporting the Archives, but not ADO. Then we separated the Archives from ADO, and I think it was the time when Marlin jumped on board with the Archives.

Board Member F: I became involved with the Hmong Archives in 2003 when I first met Marlin Heise in 2002 at the Hmong National Development Conference in California. I became a donor and donated

Hmong college students' materials such as event posters, fliers, assignments, and t-shirts from Southwest Minnesota State University and Minnesota State University, Mankato to the Archives. In 2009, I became a college professor and started to take my students to visit the Hmong Archives for their diversity and ethnic community experiences, as well as having the Archives exhibit at the Hmong Student Association's New Year Celebration or any other cultural events on campus.

2. How would you describe the goals of the Hmong Archives, and how has it grown or changed over time?

Board Member A: The goals of the Hmong Archives is to collect and preserve anything and everything relates to the Hmong people. Also to help educate both Hmong and non-Hmong about Hmong history, preserving the Hmong cultures for future generation as well as serving as a resource center for researchers, scholars, teachers and students to do research about Hmong history and its people. Hmong Archives has grown over the years in its collections of Hmong materials that include posters, videos, newspapers, books, "paj ntaub" and etc. to be preserved for the younger generation. Our collections are stored at the East Side Freedom Library and some items are stored at Mr. Marlin's house at 343 Michigan Street, Saint Paul.

Board Member B: I think one of the key goals of the Hmong Archives have always been to collect, interpret, and disseminate materials about our heritage. As a volunteer staff, working with Marlin we try to do this on a regular basis. Another important goal of the Archives is to be a resource for visiting scholars, students, teachers, and community members who are interested in researching or writing about Hmong. I think this has remained a strong focal point in terms of goals for the Archives. An area of change that I can foresee would be towards the direction of educational program such as teaching a course on Hmong history.

Board Member C: Our goals are very broad, but our human, financial, and special resources are very limited. We have done a remarkable job of collecting and preserving some 195,000 Hmong items since 1999, but our exhibiting and interpreting efforts are minimal. Each year we collect about 10,000 items, with most of them local or regional, but also many from other states, Southeast Asia, China, and other international Hmong settlements. We now emphasize collecting audiovisual and paj ntaub (Hmong embroidery) instead of printed matter, and also objects we can touch rather than digital connections that might evaporate into the clouds. This adds to our storage problems.

Board Member D: Hmong has a history dated back five thousand years ago but because there were no written documents by the Hmong, it was

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hard to trace our own history in books. Therefore, the goals of the Hmong Archives are to collect and preserved the history and culture of Hmong from all over the world in books, arts and crafts, movies, and scholarly researches and many more; especially the artifacts of actual events. In the early years of our collections, many items were donated by friends, families, and community. Marlin, our secretary also travel oversea a lot and continues to collect books and arts and crafts as he travels each year to different parts of Southeast Asia. The Hmong Archives has changed location a few times over the years due to spacing but today, we are housed at the East Side Freedom Library and is open to the public. We are growing in our collections and with today's technology, we are in the process of digitize everything for online so people in the United States as well as people around the world can easily access to our materials.

Board Member E: The goals of the Archives are still the same. One thing we changed was the name, from Hmong Nationality Archives to Hmong Archives, because we felt that foundations or non-Hmong did not see the term the way we did. Hmong Archives is probably the better name. Originally, our goal was not to seek fundings immediately but until we established ourselves for funders to see what we were doing. After several years, when we were ready to seek fundings, the country was hit hard by the depression. Foundations no longer support starting organization. This has been our problem.

Board Member F: The goal of the Hmong Archives is collecting and preserving Hmong materials and reflecting on the history of the Hmong people. The Hmong Archives is slowly growing in its board members along with both undergraduate and graduate student interns over the years. It is my hope that we will collect more books and other materials across the globe about Hmong for future students and Hmong Americans.

3. What are your goals for the Hmong Archives for the next three to five years? What priorities will help you achieve them? What barriers are in your way?

Board Member A: My goals for the Hmong Archives in the next three to five years is to have a system in place and do more planning. Having a system would help organize the organization more, and make thing easier for newcomer such as volunteers and interns. I want the organization to do more planning such as what is the next step for the organization and who is participating in it, plus the details of how it will be done. A great system to hold board members accountable and in check would be great. I believe if we could dedicate at least 6 hours (a month) of our time to the Archives that would be a good start. We all should time block and think of the Hmong Archives as a top priority. Not only

have that, but to have everybody on the same page helped a ton. Some barriers that would be in the way are time management, prioritizing, and commitment from the boards.

Board Member B: I think the most important goal for me right now with the Archives in the next three to five years is digitizing our materials and making them accessible online for interested individuals who may be doing research for a paper or just in general want to gain a better knowledge about our history and culture. I think to make this possible in terms of accessibility online will require technology, time, and monetary resources. The barriers I foresee are the costs such as computer hardware and software to get this done; and finding ways to acquire the necessary funding to make it happen.

Board Member C: By 2021 I hope our entire collection (over 200,000 items by then) can be searchable on line or by whatever apps might be used then, and new acquisitions added with less effort. I hope by then we have a solid financial base and paid full time staff (library, museum, administration/technical), and also adequate exhibit and storage space. By our 25th anniversary in 2024, I would like to see a lively research and museum center that could welcome regional and international visitors and researchers interested in all aspects of Hmong culture. We collect 13 types of materials (Archival Boxes, Audio, Books, Cards, Files, Maps, Newspapers, Objects, Periodicals, Photographs, Posters, Videos, and Works of Art), all of which we want to make accessible through our website. WorldCat gives international cataloging to Audio, Books, Maps, Newspapers, Periodicals, and Videos, but it does not always emphasize the Hmong connection, so we also are working on Microsoft Word documents. Our printed materials are in a dozen different Hmong scripts (mainly RPG White Hmong), and over twenty languages. The priorities are to continue cataloging Books with WorldCat, with perhaps a thousand titles that will require original cataloging—not held by any other library—in English, Hmong, Chinese, Lao, Thai, and other languages. Also, Corporate Files and Periodicals are being slowly typed up on Word documents to make them available online. Objects (6000 items in 200 boxes) have been sorted and re-boxed so they are ready to be photographed and data entered on a Google database when shelving can be made moveable—and volunteers are available. Hmong Archives faces the small barriers of lack of staff, equipment, space—meaning finances. We have over 1060 individual and corporate donors, and many congratulate us for our efforts to collect and preserve Hmong material culture, but it is very difficult to find donors of money and time, which is a problem all organizations face.

Board Member D: The goals of the Hmong Archives are to have everything digitized in the next couple years for anyone to use by going

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online from anywhere. We are also working on adding the educational piece to educate the community, K-12, and higher education about the Hmong culture and history through presenting in the classroom and in the community. The biggest challenge we face is that we do not have grant to staff people to work part or full-time during the day. We all are volunteers and everyone works except for Marlin, our secretary, who is retired and dedicate great amount of his time since the existing of the Hmong Archives and at East Side Freedom Library to help. He is also one of the original founder of Hmong Archives in 1999.

Board Member E: For the next five years, we really need to apply for fundings to hire staff to run the Archives. This is the only way forward, or else the Archives will be merged into something else. Our barriers are the lack of fundings and committed ED to seriously seeking fundings. *Board Member F:* Our board members are volunteers and everything we do at the Archives, we do it from our hearts for the Hmong community to preserve our history and culture. It is my hope that in the next five years, we will move the Archives to a new chapter and develop the Hmong Archives and Museum in Minnesota.

4. How can the Hmong Archives and its collections be used to supplement student learning (for both K–12 and higher education)?

Board Member A: Hmong Archives could create presentation that is educational for school and also prepare collection presentation to showcase at school or class. In tern of high schooler, I believe it will be a better idea to have them come to the H.A. as a field trip and learn over there because of more collections and more resources available for them to interact with. For other school grades, I think Hmong Archives going to their school with several collections and a great presentation would be great.

Board Member B: How I think Hmong Archives' collections can be used as a supplement for student learning in K–12 is a field trip opportunity where students can experience and learn about something new that's different from their everyday experience; and a school assignment that may ask them to research or study about a culture different from their own or about their own heritage. For higher education, I see the collections more in use as a resource for academic papers and Ph.D. dissertations.

Board Member C: Because most of our collections are from and about the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area after about 1975, local educational institutions, especially Hmong charter schools and regional college students will be the best customers for research projects. Our hope is to engage more History Day high school students to become interested in

Hmong topics for the national competition. As our collections go online, they will be able to identify specific items they wish to study, as well as more general materials they can find in their own school or college library. We have been able to help a number of international higher education students with their research projects—what could we do if our collections were totally online?

Board Member D: Hmong Archives has unique traditional artifacts and collection items that have its own story of origin. By educating students in all grade levels will help to eliminate the misleading information about the Hmong community and why we are here in the United States today. In history books for K–12, there are little to no information about Hmong people. It will also help students with self-identity and cultural pride. In the higher education, it will help students to understand a broader perspective of Hmong and where Hmong came from. The goal is to help students in higher education understand the Hmong culture and be more culturally competent when working with Hmong community. To work successfully in any ethnic group, students need to have a basic understand of the culture of every ethnicity because what works for one ethnicity may not work for another.

Board Member E: I believe that once we are fully functioning daily with regular hours, students can come and use our collections. This is when the students and the community will find the Archives most beneficial.

Board Member F: Both K–12 and college students have visited the Hmong Archives over the years. It is our hope that through our collection of books and other materials about Hmong around the globe, it will help students and the community at large in their research projects in or out of the classroom.

Conclusion and Discussion

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy or “CSP” is concerned with not only sustaining, but also revitalizing indigenous knowledge and culture (McCarty & Lee, 2014). What this requires is that spaces that are created by historically and contemporarily marginalized communities need to be as much supported as they are celebrated. The Hmong Archives embodies such an unofficial and/or unconventional social studies space. It’s a space designed not only for students of color to obtain learning opportunities outside the social studies classroom about Hmong materials that are not found in Social Studies textbooks or teacher manuals, but it is also a space created to benefit the wider community.

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Because the Hmong population in Saint Paul, Minnesota, continues to grow, there will be Hmong children to be educated as well as an increased need for Hmong K–12 teachers, and also teachers who are knowledgeable about Hmong culture and history. In this article we attempted to share why the Hmong Archives should be considered a community asset.

K–12 teachers have used the Hmong Archives as an asset to help expose their students to learning materials that are not found in the existing social studies curriculum. The importance of field trips to the Hmong Archives cannot be understated. It is our hope that this article draws attention to the Hmong Archives so those who could benefit from it, can access the growing collection. Teachers cannot teach, and students cannot learn, from experiences they don't have or are not having. Nor can they learn and grow if they are not having these types of experiences.

Notes

¹ According to its website (<https://www.hmongabc.com/pages/about-us>), “HMONG ABC is the first and the only Hmong bookstore in the world. It was started by Yuepheng L. Xiong and his wife Shoua V. Xiong in 1995. HMONG ABC has the best collections of Hmong books. It also carries many other Hmong products such as Paj Ntaub, hand-made clothings and jackets, arts and artifacts.”

² Interested readers may want to read Hartlep and Scott's (2016) *Asian / American Curricular Epistemicide: From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority* which begins by asking, who are Asian Americans? Their original research focuses on the treatment of Asian/Americans' history and their representation in K–12 social studies and history teacher manuals.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUq49u4XnVo> See also Moll, L. C. (2010). Mobilizing culture, language, and educational practices: Fulfilling the promises of Mendez and Brown. *Educational Researcher*, 39(6), 451–460. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.172.7042&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

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