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CARRYING THE SEEDS: ADAPTATIONS AND TRANSITIONS OF HMONG
AMERICAN FOOD PRODUCERS IN MISSOULA COUNTY, MONTANA

By

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Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Sciences
in Environmental Studies

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

January 2017

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ABSTRACT

Cramer, Rachel, M.S., Spring 2017

Environmental Studies

Carrying the Seeds: Adaptations and Transitions of Hmong American Food Producers in Missoula County, Montana

Chairperson: Dan Spencer

Forty years after the initial resettlement of Hmong refugees in Missoula County, Montana, the Hmong American community has undergone significant agricultural and cultural adaptations. Today, there are about 200 Hmong Americans in the county, less than 2% of the population (US Census Bureau 2010), but they make up around 40% of the farmers' market produce vendors. The thesis demonstrates that, while agriculture has played a central role in helping Hmong refugees adapt, its role is becoming more symbolic as the second generation develops an identity less connected to growing and selling food. Through a qualitative research approach using 19 in-depth interviews, the thesis examines how these participants and their families adapted to growing and selling food in western Montana during the initial resettlement years. It also investigates current agricultural and marketing challenges and strategies, and the role of agriculture in maintaining traditions. Throughout all of these agricultural and cultural adaptations, strong kinship and co-ethnic networks have increased their adaptive capacity. While the motivations to grow and sell food are diverse and have changed over time, one of the primary motivations is to maintain these networks. Lastly, the thesis explores whether the second generation of Hmong Americans intend to continue growing and selling food in the future, and how this decision may affect both personal and cultural identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am incredibly grateful to the interview participants and the greater Hmong American community in Missoula County, Montana, for sharing their stories. I would also like to thank Bonnie Buckingham from the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, Mary Poole from Soft Landing Missoula, Betsy Mulligan-Dague from the Jeannette Rankin Peace Center and Franco Salazar from the Clark Fork Market for meeting with me to discuss their organizations and my research.

I will forever be indebted to my thesis advisor Dan Spencer, Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Montana. His intellect, sincerity and generous spirit drew me out west and continue to impress me. He allowed this thesis to be my own work but guided me in the right the direction whenever I needed it.

I would also like to thank Neva Hassanein, Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Montana, who introduced me to qualitative research. My thesis is rooted in her extensive support and input. Jill Belsky, Professor of Rural and Environmental Sociology and Chair of the Department of Society and Conservation at the University of Montana, was also integral to this thesis, and I am grateful for her valuable comments.

My research would not have been possible without the generous support of the Brainerd Foundation Fellowship, the Bertha Morton Scholarship and teaching assistantships in the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, John and Susan Cramer, friends and a wonderful cohort of graduate students in the Environmental Studies and Environmental Science & Natural Resource Journalism programs.

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PREFACE

Shortly after moving to Missoula, a mountain community of 69,000 people in western Montana, I visited two of its Saturday farmers' markets. Both the Clark Fork Market and the Missoula Farmers' Market were bustling with morning shoppers despite the simultaneous timing and close proximity. The tables were overflowing with colorful produce; the smell of baked goods wafted across the parking lot, and salutations merged into a soft murmur. Many of the vendors were first and second-generation Hmong Americans, but I did not know that at the time. I filled my bag with softball-sized purple onions, potatoes and garlic, and I went home.

A few days later, I wandered into a coffee shop and casually flipped through the pages of an abandoned newspaper until I came across "Things You Should Know about Missoula." I set down my mug and leaned in. The article seemed intended for new students – like myself – who were beginning to trickle in for the fall semester at the University of Montana. I read about the Ice Age floods, the Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the arrival of Euro-American settlers. I read about the wildfire season and the best pizza place. All of this was interesting, but what made an impression was the story of Jerry Daniels, a smokejumper from Missoula, who was recruited by the CIA and worked with the Hmong in Laos during the Vietnam War. When the war ended, Daniels helped facilitate the resettlement process for many of the Hmong refugees, which included resettlement in Missoula County. The CIA? Refugees in western Montana? I knew there had to be more to this story than a casually summed-up paragraph.

During my last semester as an undergraduate student at Iowa State University, my former anthropology professor contacted me to help develop an exhibit. She worked closely with Hmong Americans in central Iowa and the Twin Cities, and the exhibit was intended to help share their personal stories through video recordings and artifacts. Unfortunately, I did not see the project completed before I graduated, but the story of the seeds made a significant impression on me. Before fleeing the highlands of Laos, many of the Hmong sewed seeds into their hems. They carried them to the refugee camps in Thailand and eventually the US. Since the majority were subsistence farmers, it makes sense that they would want to bring their livelihoods with them. But I also wondered if the seeds represented something more.

What was it like to travel all the way to Montana, to plant those seeds and watch them grow? Did they feel hope? Sadness? From my trips to the farmers' markets, it appeared that the Hmong American vendors and the greater Missoula community were both benefiting from participating in the local food system. But was this truly the case? How does a group of people from Southeast Asia adapt their agricultural and cultural traditions to western Montana, and what does the transition look like across generations?

INTRODUCTION

The Hmong are an ethnic group indigenous to the highlands of Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and southwestern China with a long history of persecution and diaspora. In the 1960s, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited nearly 30,000 Laotian Hmong guerrillas to fight in the “Secret War,” a covert operation in Laos, during the Vietnam War (McCoy 2002). The majority of Laotian Hmong were small-scale farmers who grew rice, corn and opium poppies. They had very little access to formal education, but their geographical knowledge of the region and ability to quickly cover large areas made them indispensable to American forces. At the end of the Vietnam War and Laotian Civil War, the communist Pathet Lao insurgents overthrew the Royal Lao government, and began an extermination campaign against the Hmong.

Between 1975 and 1982, around 285,000 Hmong fled to Thailand to escape retaliation, and by 1985, approximately 100,000 were granted asylum in the US (Keightley 2010). Due to a friendly relationship with CIA agent Jerry Daniels, a former smokejumper from Montana, several hundred Hmong resettled in Missoula County to establish a new life in a drastically different ecological, social and political environment. Today, there are about 200 Hmong Americans in Missoula County, less than 2% of the population (US Census Bureau 2010), but they make up around 40% of the farmers’ market produce vendors.

In this thesis I argue that, while agriculture has played a central role in helping Hmong refugees adapt to life in Missoula County, Montana, its role is becoming more symbolic as the second generation develops an identity less connected to growing and selling food. Approximately 40% of the produce vendors at Missoula County’s farmers’

markets are Hmong American. To understand how they made this transition from a resettled population in the late 1970s to community providers in the 21st Century, the thesis investigates their agricultural and marketing adaptations during the early years of resettlement. Second, it compares their current challenges and strategies with the results from the Community Food and Agriculture (CFA) focus-group study in 2004 (McCourt, Seagle and Jones). Third, by understanding how the motivations to grow and sell food have changed over time, the thesis identifies some of the social and cultural benefits and challenges – not just economic – that can come with participation in a local food system, especially for resettled populations and subsequent generations. Lastly, the thesis explores whether the second generation of Hmong Americans intend to continue growing and selling food in the future, and how this decision may affect both personal and cultural identity.

Below, the literature review examines how adaptation, a term originating from the field of evolutionary biology, applies to agriculture and acculturation. Agrarian refugees, immigrants and non-immigrant ethnic groups are continuously confronted with ecological, social and political change. An individual or group's ability to respond and reduce its vulnerability indicates its adaptive capacity, which affects personal and cultural identity. The literature review also explores how participation in alternative food systems can benefit ethnic groups, and the ways in which a 'food lens' can be used to better understand transitions and identity formations. Additionally, it investigates how horizontal and vertical networks – including adapted beginning farmer programs – can connect individuals and groups to the resources they need. Lastly, the literature review examines the results and approach from the Hmong American focus group study in the

Missoula County 2004 Community Food Assessment. The methods section outlines how qualitative data were collected, why I selected my approach, and its limitations. This section also includes the methodology and quantitative results regarding the percentage of farmers' market produce vendors in the county who are Hmong American. The analysis looks at patterns and contrasts among responses from the 19 participants, and the discussion proceeds to connect these findings to the literature and fill gaps. The conclusion provides a final synthesis of the thesis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adaptation and Transformation

A significant part of this thesis explores how Hmong refugees have adapted to their new ecological, social and economic environment in western Montana by growing their own food and participating in the local food system. The term ‘adaptation’ originated from the field of evolutionary biology. In this context, it refers to “the development of genetic or behavioral characteristics which enable organisms or systems to cope with environmental changes in order to survive and reproduce” (Smit and Wandel 2006, 283). In the past several decades, however, the term has been adopted and expanded by social scientists, often to describe cultural survival and the practices that allow a particular society to flourish, as well as transformative change in the context of external social, environmental or political forces (Smit and Wandel 2006).

Social scientists Smit and Wandel define adaptation as “a process, action or outcome in a system in order for the system to better cope with, manage or adjust to some changing condition, stress, hazard, risk or opportunity” (2006, 282). These adaptations can be “anticipatory or reactive” and occur across scales, from the individual to the national (Smit and Wandel 2006, 282). Individuals and groups of people adapt to new conditions through technological innovation and by adjusting their patterns of behavior. While genetic characteristics may play a role in the adaptation process, the focus from a social science perspective is on learned behavior and the context that supports or inhibits how people respond to change.

According to Smit and Wandel, “adaptations are manifestations of adaptive capacity” (2006, 286). Adaptive capacity refers to the individual or group’s ability to

adjust and reduce their vulnerability (Wyborn et al. 2014). This capacity depends upon access to resources, including technology and knowledge; social networks; policies and the structures of institutions and government; and perceptions of risk and agency.

Vulnerability reflects “the exposure and sensitivity of that system to hazardous conditions and the ability or capacity or resilience of the system to cope, adapt, or recover from the effects of those conditions” (Smit and Wandel 2006, 286). In other words, vulnerability refers to the enduring impacts from a change in the social, economic or ecological environment. It is the impact cost minus the net adaptation savings.

Adaptation pathways “envison adaptation as a continual pathway of change and response embedded within [the] broader sociopolitical context” (Wyborn, Yung, Murphy and Williams 2014, 669). The pathways framework acknowledges that decisions are based on past experiences and future options, and focuses attention on the continuous process of change and the response to that change. Pathways are not fixed or predictable responses. Rather, they “create space to envision individual and collective agency,” and depending on the social, economic and political context, individuals and groups may alter pathways (Wyborn et al. 2014, 279). Adaptation pathways can include both short-term coping strategies and long-term transformation (Wyborn et al. 2014). Transformation, as opposed to adaptation, occurs when large-scale changes lead to a fundamentally different system (Apgar, Allen, Moore and Ataria 2015). When a system is no longer viable, often due to external forces, transformational change allows for new arrangements to take hold.

Agricultural adaptations and transformation represent the interplay between cultural and biological adaptations (Smit and Skinner 2002). For example, farmers in a semi-arid climate may modify their practices (i.e., a cultural adaptation) by growing a

drought-resistant crop (i.e., a biological adaptation). Over time, the process of artificial selection may improve the crop's adaptive capacity to thrive despite limited precipitation, thereby boosting the farmers' adaptive capacity to continue their agrarian lifestyles. However, if drought persists and the crop cannot survive, the farmers may be forced to completely alter their agricultural practices or abandon farming. This situation would represent a transformation. Beyond the ecological context, however, changes may occur in economic and/or social environments (Smit and Skinner 2002). For instance, the price of fuel and crop prices in the global market can significantly affect farmers, but a community's support for local food may mitigate these effects. Agricultural adaptation is made possible through altered human behavior, technology and conditions that allow for innovation and knowledge sharing, and the scales at which adaptations occur can vary between the "plant, plot, field, farm, region, and nation" (Smit and Skinner 2002, 94).

As adaptation is a necessary component of sustainable agriculture, cultural adaptation is often necessary for cultural survival. The immigrant experience – moving from one country to another – is often difficult for individuals and families. Immigrants may be separated from family and friends and disconnected from institutions and cultural practices to which they are accustomed (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova and Louie 2002). Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones assert that "in most cases, the immigration experience is accompanied by acculturation" (2006, 2), which can be defined as "the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact" (Gibson 2001, 19). As a result, immigrants must decide whether to retain one's cultural ideals, values and behaviors or adopt new ones belonging to the dominant culture. The process of acculturation may refer to nonimmigrant ethnic

groups, as well, since they are also confronted with a dominant culture other than their own (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006).

Acculturation and identity are intertwined concepts. The term 'identity' has many meanings, but Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones assert that "cultural identity underlie[s] acculturation, and personal identity helps to 'anchor' the immigrant person during cultural transition and adaptation" (2006, 5). Identity emerges from the complex interplay between the individual and context. In other words, it is the "organization of self-understandings that define one's place in the world" (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006, 5). While personal identity refers to an individual's goals, values, beliefs and behaviors, cultural identity refers to a group's shared goals, values, beliefs and behaviors that are expressed within the group and towards other cultural groups; cultural identity also encompasses the extent to which an individual feels like he or she belongs in the group (Jensen 2003; Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts and Romero 1999; Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006).

For immigrant and nonimmigrant ethnic people, identity formation may be especially pertinent, as they must decide which cultural elements they will maintain and which they will let go in favor of the dominant culture. A consistent and actively constructed personal identity is "often associated with psychosocial outcomes" and "may help to prevent or alleviate distress and other problematic outcomes" (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006, 7-8). Immigrant and minority individuals may experience high levels of prejudice and discrimination by those in the dominant culture who expect them to "leave their cultural baggage at the door" (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006, 8). Heightened cultural and physical differences may increase cases of

discrimination, both from individuals and institutions (Mummendey et al. 2001; Simon and Lynch 1999). For example, wearing a hijab or simply having dark skin may mark an individual as a ‘foreigner’ even if he or she was born in the United States.

Strong identity formation is especially important for immigrant and non-immigrant ethnic adolescents and young adults (i.e., between the ages of 13 and 25) because they are “faced with the challenges of creating a cultural identity that incorporates elements of both the heritage and receiving cultures, in addition to confronting the normative personal identity issues that characterize this developmental period” (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006, 3). Several studies indicate that individuals who did not retain values and ideals of their heritage culture had a higher risk of substance abuse (Gil, Wagner and Vega 2000) and sexual risk taking (Ford and Norris 1993). A strong personal and cultural identity can help stabilize individuals through transitions and periods of stress.

Changes in identity occur when one’s context does not align with one’s beliefs and values (Bosma and Kunnen 2001). An individual can respond by confronting the change and adjusting one’s identity; using social support to decide how to respond in a socially acceptable manner; or ignoring the situation (Berzonsky 1990). In some situations, an individual may simultaneously feel rejected or discriminated in the dominant culture while being ostracized from members in his or her own group. Berry argues that biculturalism – an approach that incorporates the ideals, values and practices of both the receiving and heritage cultures – is the most adaptive acculturation strategy (1997). However, in situations where the cultures are very different and elements are even contradictory, biculturalism can be challenging, thereby creating an internal ‘tug of

war' within the individual (Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones 2006). It must be noted that identity formation is an ongoing process, even after adolescence. It is adaptive and continually revised throughout a person's life. This concept of continuous change and response aligns with the literature on adaptation pathways (Wyborn et al. 2014). In some situations, the pathway may even lead to a transformative change in which the individual abandons one's heritage culture.

Changing Contexts: The New American Farmer

Small family farms – defined as operations that earn less than \$350,000 per year (Hoppe and MacDonald 2013) – are on the rise in the United States; in addition, the number of women, Latino and Asian farmers is growing faster than any other demographic group (Ostrom, Cha and Flores 2010). While many agricultural communities struggle to maintain economic viability, especially with the increase in farmer retirements, a new wave of aspiring farmers could help preserve farmland, support food security and strengthen local communities.

According to the USDA, a local food system includes food that is produced and distributed within a 400-mile radius (Martinez et al. 2010). The demand for locally sourced, high quality and sustainably produced farm products can often provide a niche market with higher profit for entrepreneurial farmers (Ostrom 2006; Ostrom and Jussaume 2007). Small-scale farming and marketing in a local food system can also offer an alternative to mainstream employment options (Salaff et al. 2002). This is especially significant for agrarian immigrants and refugees who may have more challenges entering the competitive job market due to language barriers and limited skill sets (Reed, Andrzejewski and Strumbos 2010). In addition to providing supplemental income,

participation in the local food system may improve their access to fresh and healthy food, as well as support social inclusion (Laverentz and Krotz 2012).

Benefits from Participation in Local Food Systems

Drastic changes in lifestyle and dietary habits resulting from resettlement in the United States can affect significantly the health and wellbeing of immigrants, refugees and subsequent generations. According to Vue, Wolff and Goto (2011), Asian immigrants have a higher risk of chronic diseases and premature death in comparison to other demographic groups. This is largely due to shifting diets that include higher levels of fat content and cholesterol, processed foods, fast food, snacking, lower levels of fruit and vegetable intake and less physical activity. According to a 2010 study, gardening can reduce some of these adverse effects by decreasing Body Mass Index (BMI) (Davis et al.) and increasing vegetable consumption (Carney et al. 2012). Participation in local food systems can also offer less tangible benefits related to community cohesion (Pace and Anderson 2008; Zoellner et al. 2012). For example, another 2010 study found an association between community gardeners and participation in neighborhood events and food sharing (McCormack et al. 2010). Growing and selling ethnic food can also help preserve traditions by providing culturally relevant, affordable food to the ethnic community (Darcé 2010; Patil et al. 2010; Lutheran Social Services 2011).

Using a Food Lens to Understand Change

While food is a basic necessity that “defines the human experience,” it is also intrinsic to culture and identity (Weller and Turkon 2015, 58). An individual’s production and consumption of food are physical and symbolic acts that communicate both personal and group identity (Wilk 1999). During the process of assimilation, immigrants are likely

to shift their cultural and dietary habits toward the dominant culture, but food can also become a symbol to “maintain group solidarity and personal identity” (Weller and Turkon 2015, 58). It can be used to resist change and transfer cultural identity to subsequent generations (Cook 2008; Ferrero 2002). According to Weller and Turkon (2015, 71), “food is a physical manifestation of memory that connects immigrants to geographically and chronologically distant family members, experiences, and communities.” The preparation and consumption of food can “function as both physical symbols and acts of nostalgia” (Weller and Turkon 2015, 71). Therefore, examining the “interactions and meanings surrounding this preparation and consumption of food” can be a lens through which to understand how people adapt to changes and how this affects identity during the immigration process (57).

Heritage foods can help immigrants maintain ties to the people and places from which they emigrated (Holtzman 2006; Wilk 1999). Losing access – physically and symbolically – to the production and consumption of these foods is often connected to loss of culture (Gabaccia 1998). Access can be “limited by the physical, political, economic and sociocultural realities of the immigrant’s new environment” (Weller and Turkon 2015, 58). For example, specific ingredients may not be available, or perhaps they are available but negative associations from the dominant culture limit their use. In some cases, consuming heritage foods can be an act of resistance to homogenization or nostalgia (Weller and Turkon 2015). Some individuals may only consume heritage foods during holidays and special occasions. This association between specific foods, social gatherings and ceremony can “act as the primary conduit connecting them to their heritage culture” (Weller and Turkon 2015, 62).

In Weller and Turkon's study of identity maintenance and formation for first- and second-generation Latinos in Ithaca, NY, second-generation participants described two trends. Participants with "poor Spanish language skills, whose parents actively tried to acculturate, or who came from areas with small or absent Latino communities placed more importance on the consumption of heritage foods" to maintain identity (2015, 63). Participants from large, urban Latino communities more often viewed "language as having an importance equal to or greater than food" (63). The researchers note, however, that when heritage food becomes less available (e.g., college cafeterias), its symbolic role can increase in importance. "Identity is a dynamic construct that develops over time through the acquisition of new behaviors, attitudes and experiences" (Weller and Turkon 2015, 58). As the context changes, aspects of an individual's identity may also shift in importance.

Weller and Turkon (2015) use the four-stage model developed by Tse (2001) to understand the relationship between dietary changes and identity for immigrants and subsequent generations. In Stage 1, ethnic unawareness, an individual does not view him/herself "as having an identity distinct from the surrounding community" and prefers heritage foods (Weller and Turkon 2015, 67). In Stage 2, ethnic ambivalence and evasion, an individual becomes aware of his/her minority status, which can result in a negative attitude toward his/her identity and the rejection of heritage foods. Stage 3, ethnic emergence, involves actively trying to understand his/her minority status and gaining a more positive view of his/her heritage. This also involves an exploration of heritage foods in the context of the ethnic culture.

In Stage 4, ethnic incorporation, an individual incorporates minority identity into his/her overall social identity and adopts heritage foods as symbolic ethnicity (Weller and Turkon 2015). Individuals who experience culture shock move out of Stage 1 by either “making a concerted effort to assimilate (Stage 2) or by trying to maintain and incorporate their heritage identity into their emerging social identity (Stages 3 & 4)” (Weller and Turkon 2015, 69). An individual can remain in Stage 2 throughout life or skip it completely, depending on a “complex interplay of factors that includes: the circumstances under which they immigrated; socioeconomic status; level of education; community demographics; ability to visit their heritage country; stigmatization ... and knowledge of English and American culture” (69-70). The researchers note that “identity is not rigid” and “stages can overlap” (67). The model does, however, provide a conceptual framework to understand how these factors connect to the production and consumption of food.

Beginning Farmer Programs and Social Networks

Beginning, small-scale, food producers often face numerous challenges including the high cost of land, equipment and supplies; government regulations; and global competition (Ostrom et al. 2010). Agricultural research and outreach in the United States has focused primarily on large-scale, commodity-crop production, and many supporters of sustainable agriculture believe these programs should dedicate more time and resources to supporting the needs of small-scale and mid-scale production for local consumption. As defined by the USDA, beginning farmer programs can help fill this gap. They typically support farmers or ranchers who would like to start an enterprise or have been in operation for less than ten years. The programs generally provide workshops and

trainings (e.g., improving small-scale production through ecologically based practices and development of viable business plans). They can help link participants to resources (e.g., land, equipment and loans) and markets, including farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture and restaurants (Hill 2011; Macy 2011; Nickel-Kailing, 2011; Pereira, 2007; Tufts 2011).

Beginning farmer programs can also play a significant role in the success of immigrant and refugee food producers. This is accomplished largely through the role of beginning farmer programs as social networks, which link immigrants and refugees to influential individuals and groups that can provide better access to resources and markets (International Rescue Committee 2012). Social networks are the “total set of linkages among all of the members of a particular population (e.g., the social network characteristics of a village community or a bounded work group)” (Mitchell and Trickett 1980, 28). The social ties – the relationships that link individuals in a social network – are influenced by the frequency and type of interactions they experience.

According to Emery and Flora, there are two types of social networks (2006). One is called the horizontal network, which is developed among peers. These networks typically involve a high frequency of encounters and lead to group solidarity. Vertical networks, however, link individuals from different horizontal networks. The frequency of interactions is much lower and involves individuals with varying levels of influence. Relationships between individuals in a vertical network are weaker, but they may enable better access to resources, such as employment opportunities. Examples of horizontal network benefits in ethnic communities include: shared interests, close relationships, available labor, informal loans and subleasing agreements (Sanders and Nee 1996).

Immigrants and refugee farmers may lack local knowledge regarding market information, regulations, growing seasons, and business management skills (Ostrom et al. 2010). Beginning farmer programs, however, can help ethnic communities overcome these challenges by linking them to vertical networks (e.g., access to land, credit and farmers' markets) (Hill 2011; Ostrom et al. 2010). The programs often use translators in addition to curriculum that incorporates simple text and visuals (Hightower and Griffin 2012). Additionally, hands-on learning, farmer-to-farmer networks and mentor programs play a significant role in the success of immigrant and refugee farmers in these programs (Tufts 2011).

Agricultural Experience of Hmong Americans in Missoula County, Montana

According to the 2004 Community Food Assessment (CFA) for Missoula County, Montana, many of the Hmong American families gardened in backyard plots to improve household food security during the initial resettlement years (i.e., late 1970s and 1980s) (McCourt, Seagle and Jones). They began selling produce at the Missoula Farmers' Market in the mid-1980s, and by 2003, approximately 40% of the vendors were Hmong American (Bradford 2003). During the CFA focus group, researchers found that the Hmong American participants value gardening for the health benefits, added income and improved food security; several elderly members emphasized the importance of having productive work to ward off depression and physical pain (McCourt et al. 2004). Participants also expressed that selling produce at the Missoula Farmers' Market helped them feel more engaged with the community.

In the 2004 study, the Hmong American food producers who participated reported numerous challenges to grow and sell food. In addition to a short growing season and

times of drought, increasing subdivisions, the high cost of land, and limited personal time restricted these farmers' ability to scale-up production (McCourt et al. 2004). Participants also discussed significant market barriers. They explained that the limitation on the number of vendors at the Missoula Farmers' Market prevented some individuals from being able to sell their produce. They believed they could increase sales at the market if its hours of operation were extended and they had larger vendor space.

Competition was another challenge. Both Hmong Americans and other regional growers generally sold the same produce, herbs and flowers, and several participants in the focus group stated that they could not compete with the low prices at Walmart and other large retail outlets. One participant explained that her aunt had a contract with the Good Food Store in Missoula, but she struggled to produce enough and had to enlist the help of her extended family to fill the order; when it became too difficult to continually supply the demand, she reverted to selling at the farmers' market where she could earn a higher profit. The focus-group participants shared an interest in learning how to extend the growing season with small greenhouses and heaters. The CFA reflects many of the themes expressed in the literature regarding the benefits and challenges of small-scale agriculture for local markets, as well as the use of horizontal networks through kinship and ethnic ties.

The decision to use a focus-group approach in the 2004 CFA study was made after a leader in the Hmong American community suggested it, but the choice of methodology has its limitations. A focus-group interview can be useful in collecting large amounts of data quickly and encouraging participants to share information in a supportive environment. It can also help researchers overcome language and culture barriers

(McCourt et al. 2004), but differences in gender, age and other social dynamics in the group can influence how participants respond to the interview questions. Ideally, the participants in a focus group do not know each other in order to reduce the effect that relationships – which may be unbeknownst to the researcher – could have on the responses. Because the Hmong Americans in Missoula County are part of a small, tight-knit community, the focus group participants were very familiar with each other. Additionally, a translator was present during the interview and met with the participants several weeks later to clarify content. But it is difficult to know how accurately the views were transcribed and whether the relationship with the translator influenced responses. The study also lacked a focus on second generation Hmong Americans. While different ages were present in the study group, the results did not indicate specifically how Hmong Americans raised in the US perceive their role in agriculture and whether they wish to continue in the future.

METHODS

Qualitative Research Methods

Using in-depth interviews with open-ended questions, I gathered responses from a sample of 19 Hmong Americans, approximately 10% of the total Hmong American population living in Missoula County, Montana (US Census Bureau 2010). I selected the method of personal interviews to gain in-depth accounts of agricultural/market experiences and perspectives regarding Hmong American cultural identity. I wanted to see what commonalities existed in the adaptations, challenges and strategies implemented by the participants to grow and sell food. Initially, I considered a focus group approach to gathering responses. Focus group interviews can be an easy way to quickly accumulate data, provide opportunities to examine group dynamics and interactions, and create an environment where participants might feel more at-ease to speak in front of a researcher (Freitas et al. 1998).

I soon realized, however, that personal interviews would be more conducive for the participants and my research needs. Because many of the Hmong American food producers and sellers are working other jobs, attending school or caring for family members, assembling participants for a focus group study would be logistically very challenging. Focus group studies can also be problematic when the participants have relationships unbeknownst to the researcher that might influence how people choose to respond to the interview questions. Some individuals may dominate the responses and prevent quieter participants from sharing their viewpoints. Writing a survey and mailing it to Hmong American food producers and sellers would have been problematic for some of the elders who are not as comfortable reading and writing in English. They might also

feel uneasy sharing information with an unknown source. In-person interviews can be helpful in building trust, ensuring that the question is explained in a way that makes sense to the interviewee and prompting for more depth or clarification in a response (Freitas et al. 1998).

All of the participants currently grow and/or sell food at farmers' markets. Topics covered in the interviews included their background experiences in growing and selling food; agricultural adaptations during resettlement; current challenges and strategies to grow and sell food; motivations to grow and/or sell food; and Hmong American identity. Nine of the participants (five women and four men) were first-generation Hmong Americans who immigrated to the US as teens or adults. The other ten participants (four women and six men) were second-generation Hmong Americans who were born in the US. The youngest of the second-generation participants was still attending high school at the time of the interview, while the oldest second-generation participant is the mother of two young children.

Interviews were 30 minutes to two hours and took place either on the participant's property or in a public space in Missoula, including the library, Sentinel High School, the Clark Fork Market, and the University of Montana campus. Four of the interviews included a pair of participants. In one situation, the father worried about his English proficiency and asked his teenage daughter to help explain. This was beneficial to the research because she was able to clarify some of her father's responses, while also providing her own perspective and personal experiences. A similar situation occurred when I interviewed a first-generation Hmong American woman at the Clark Fork Market. I also interviewed a pair of friends together, and at a later date, I interviewed two spouses

simultaneously. These situations seemed to work well because the participants could add on or respond to each other, which led to more clarity and detailed information without prompts.

To find participants, I relied on chain referrals. Susie Miller worked very closely with the Hmong population as an English instructor when they first arrived in Missoula County. She collaborated with several Hmong community members to write *Hmong Voices of Montana* (1992) and helped organize a story cloth exhibit at the Missoula Art Museum. Susie contacted one of her Hmong American friends to explain the project and asked whether she would be interested in participating. She agreed to an interview and later referred me to other contacts. Bonnie Buckingham from CFAC and a fellow Environmental Studies graduate student also provided contacts, and several were able to refer me to friends and relatives who agreed to participate.

Additionally, I attended one of the Missoula Farmers' Market meetings in the spring of 2016, and with permission from the organizers, I explained my project and asked if anyone would be willing to meet with me for interviews the following week. Two individuals at the meeting did not want to be interviewed and did not suggest other people who might be willing to participate. Several of the contacts were also difficult to reach and never returned my calls or had voice boxes that were full. However, the individuals who did participate were very receptive to the interviews, and several of the second-generation Hmong Americans were particularly interested in sharing their experiences regarding the preservation and fusion of Hmong culture in the US. I relied on chain referrals from both the Hmong-American and non-Hmong community in Missoula to find subsequent participants. The process was much easier when I was able to attend

the farmers' markets in downtown Missoula where previous study participants and contacts, including farmers' market staff, were able to introduce me to vendors to arrange interviews.

There were several limitations to my choice of methodology. Since I was primarily dependent on a few contacts for referrals, I did not have a random sample of participants. Many of the interviewees are related to one another, and several mentioned that everyone in the Hmong community in Missoula County knows one another. A few of the older participants felt that their English skills were not proficient in fully answering my questions and asked someone else to be present to help translate when needed. While this was beneficial in communicating the question and receiving a response, it is always possible that something was accidentally miscommunicated or that the presence of the other translator influenced the response. My position as a young, Euro-American graduate student may have affected responses and how I interpreted them as well. Qualitative research is limited by the inaccuracy of generalization and the possibility of research bias (Creswell and Clark 2010). I attempted to compensate for this by including many direct quotes from the participants. However, bias exists even in the selection of quotes to include.

Quantitative Research Methods

Bradford estimated that 40% of the vendors at the Missoula Farmers' Market in 2003 were Hmong American. Since then, the number of farmers' markets in Missoula County has grown and diversified into non-produce items for sale. I contacted the market masters of the Missoula Farmers' Market, Clark Fork Market, Orchard Homes Farmers' Market, Target Range Farmers' Market and Littlebird Market to investigate whether this

statistic had changed. Considering only the produce vendors, approximately 40% are still Hmong American. I visited two of the markets that have the largest number of vendors, the Missoula Farmers’ Market and the Clark Fork Market, to confirm the market masters’ responses. I walked through the markets mid-morning in September and categorized the vendors based on what they were selling: produce; cheese, meat, fish; processed food; Food, drinks; baked goods; flowers, plants; other. The category “Processed food” includes jam, preserves, sauces, salsa, oil, and candy, while the “Food, drinks” category represents ready-to-eat products such as breakfast burritos and lattes that are usually consumed at the market. Vendors who only sell flowers or nursery plants are recorded under “Flowers, plants,” and the “Other” category represents vendors selling soap, wool, deodorant, tinctures.

Types of Vendors at Farmers’ Markets in Missoula County, MT, 2016

	Farmers’ Markets in Missoula County					Total	%
Vendor Type	Clark Fork	Missoula	Orchard Homes	Target Range	Little Bird Market		
Produce	38	33	5	5	2	83	45.4%
Cheese, meat, fish	8	0	0	0	1	9	5%
Processed food	12	4	0	0	2	18	9.8%
Food, drinks	16	5	0	0	0	21	11.5%
Baked goods	11	9	4	2	1	27	14.8%
Flowers, plants	3	4	0	0	0	7	3.8%
Other	5	0	2	1	10	18	9.8%
Total	93	55	11	8	16	183	100%

Proportion of Hmong American Produce Vendors at Farmers' Markets in Missoula County, MT, 2016

	Farmers' Markets in Missoula County					Total	%
Produce Vendor	Clark Fork	Missoula	Orchard Homes	Target Range	Little Bird Market		
Non-Hmong American)	23	17	5	5	1	51	61.4%
Hmong American	15	16	0	0	1	32	38.6%
Total	38	33	5	5	2	83	100%

It was difficult determining to which category some of the vendors belonged since some of the single-table vendors sell a mix. For example, some of the Eastern European vendors at the Missoula Farmers' Market sold cucumbers, tomatoes, plum preserves and baked goods. In these situations, I categorized the vendors based on what appeared to be the primary item (i.e., greatest quantity) present. Because my results align closely to the market masters' responses, it is reasonable to conclude about 40% of the Missoula County produce vendors in 2016 are Hmong American. Staff at the Good Food Store in Missoula and the Growers' Co-op said Hmong American farmers do not currently sell to them.

For the purposes of my study, I believe that I reached theoretical saturation – a qualitative research concept in which the researcher stops collecting information and analyzing it when no new data is presented (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The responses from the 19 interviews reflected common themes in the benefits, challenges, strategies and motivations to grow and sell food. They also highlighted the role of agriculture in Hmong culture even though the experiences of the participants were diverse and reflect

generational differences. All of the participants' names are pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

ANALYSIS

Hli led me to the sixth greenhouse and opened the door. My winter-weary eyes were met with varying shades of green as the smell of soil and moisture awakened my hope of spring. While we walked through the aisles of seedling trays, Hli pointed out three kinds of tomatoes, kale and chard, broccoli, cauliflower, a variety of peppers, onions, Chinese cabbage, eggplant, flowers and herbs. Essentially, anything that could grow mid-summer in western Montana was getting a significant jump-start in Hli's greenhouse. Her young grandson squeezed by us in his Batman baseball cap and rubber boots, and occasionally she would say something to him in Hmong.

After the tour, we sat at her dining room table while her husband fixed the kitchen sink and her grandson played with a handheld game in the living room. Like all of my interactions with participants during the spring and fall of 2016, I explained the purpose of my project, asked for permission to turn on the recorder, and began the interview.

Agricultural Experiences of the Participants

In Laos

All nine of the participants who emigrated from Laos to the US had been significantly involved in agriculture prior to the move. For instance, during the interview with Kub, he explained:

My agricultural experience was very strong when I was very little. Both my parents [were] farmers. They [were] farming in Laos, and during the war, my

dad [was] helping the Americans fight the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War between 1960-1975. So my mom would be the one who take care of the family, and us children were helping my mom. So our primary work for living is doing farm[ing]. I grew up as a farm kid, and . . . later on, I bec[a]me the person to support my mom while my dad is gone to serve the country. So I start very little, as little as I can remember, probably like five, four years old.

The participants' families had been subsistence farmers, primarily growing two types of rice – sticky rice and river rice – and several varieties of corn. They also grew fruits and vegetables such as mustard greens, Asian garlic chives, squash, lemongrass, sugar cane, banana and bittermelon. While all nine mentioned that their families had chickens, several also had hogs, water buffalo and horses.

They practiced swidden agriculture, a farming method that involves clearing vegetation to grow food for several years before allowing the natural vegetation to return.

Mos pointed up to the mountains and recalled:

Back then, we don't do garden like this. We do up the mountain like that. They go cut out the tree. They burn, and then you go do it up the mountain like that. Real farm, you have to cut down everything. You have to do by hand – like long time ago. We grow rice field up the mountain.

Huab said they planted from January to March. From June to December, they would harvest their crops, and the cycle would begin again. The rainy season lasted from June through August.

Only two of the participants, Ci and Choj, attended school as children, while the other seven stayed home to support their families. “I remember when I was little, my mom take us to the farm, and if it rain, you have to keep going non-stop,” said Mos. “Otherwise the weeds going to take over, and after that, you [are] going to be starved for the year.” All of the work was done using hand labor or with assistance from livestock. While none of the participants mentioned opium poppy production during the interviews,

Liag's account in *Hmong Voices of Montana* stated that her family grew poppies in addition to corn and rice (Miller, Kiatoukayay and Yang 1992). Since an article in the *Missoulian* also stated that Choj's family grew poppies in Laos (Kidston, 2015), it is possible that other participants' families were involved as well but chose not to share this information during the interviews.

When Choj was 11, he was recruited, along with his father and younger brother, to work for the CIA. The Pathet Lao captured his father in 1967, and he never saw him again. Choj told me, "I miss my father since August '67 until now. He got free after somebody find him, but he died ... between '82 and '83." At the end of the Secret War and the overthrow of the Royal Lao Government, the participants left Laos to escape retaliation, but they brought their agricultural heritage with them. Kiab, a second-generation Hmong American participant I spoke with, said that her parents travelled at night when it was safest to get to the Thai refugee camps and carried seeds of mustard greens with them. She explained that people hid seeds by sewing them into their hems, "If you could take anything with you, that's how [you] did it. If [you] made it." Many families did not make it to the refugee camps. Liag's grandmother and mother both died on the way, and Liag almost drowned while crossing the Mekong River into Thailand with her brother (Miller, Kiatoukayay and Yang 1992).

The refugee camps offered safety, but daily life was often monotonous and significantly limited. Kub arrived at the refugee camp with his family when he was a teenager. During the interview, he explained that they were unable to farm while they were there:

There [was] no place to go. So we just stay there, waiting to see if any other country will come to accept us to go to that country. There is nothing we do in camp.

Kub's uncle had worked closely with CIA agent Jerry Daniels, and after the war, Daniels sponsored him to resettle in Missoula, Montana. Once established, his uncle was then able to sponsor Kub and his family. Eight of the nine first-generation Hmong American participants resettled in Missoula in the late 1970's as teens and young adults. The fifth participant, Hli, lived in France for 17 years before moving with her family to Missoula in 1993.

Adapting to Life in Missoula County

The first generation participants said that they wanted to continue growing food for their families when they resettled in Missoula. However, many were living in apartments and did not have access to land. Kub, who was only 15 years old when he left the Thai refugee camp to come to Montana, recalled, "Actually, after we arrive here, life [was] very hard for us because we [didn't] have a place to farm or garden so we pretty much hang around . . . My parents [were] old. They [could not] work." He explained that anyone could farm on public land for several years in Laos, but in the US, "a lot of place, you know, is private property, and it's really hard to go ask somebody, 'Hey, can I garden in your place for this year?'" While Kub was still in high school, his brother bought property, and Kub and his parents helped with the gardening. After graduation and earning a degree from the University of Montana, Kub and his wife moved nearby to Frenchtown, MT. They began a garden of their own while continuing to assist his family's farming endeavors.

In addition to family support, several of the participants mentioned that Lao Family Community, a federally funded agency, provided a space for resettled families to grow food. Choj said each of the participating families had a six-by-ten-foot plot and simply paid a yearly fee to cover the cost of the electric pump for water. Paj said:

As far back as I can remember, we've had a garden ... there were multiple community gardens that I remember. This one was on South Reserve, and multiple families farmed on it.

Residents in Missoula also offered sections of their property to grow food. Ntaub recalled that soon after she arrived, an American woman said she wanted to be her friend and introduced her to someone with a large yard where she could garden. Ntaub said, "The lady show me what to plant, what kind of vegetable, where can I find the seeds." The woman also helped Ntaub learn how to bundle and price her produce to sell at the farmers' market. Foom, a second generation Hmong American, explained that his math teacher offered part of his backyard for Foom's family to grow food. They currently manage three separate gardens – one in their backyard, another at his math teacher's home and a third outside the city limits of Frenchtown. Many of the families still manage several plots. Three of the participants explained that their families have a backyard with a greenhouse or smaller garden within city limits in addition to a larger garden or farm in the country where they have more space to grow food and raise chickens.

Before 2006, spouses Mos and Keej also grew food at their home and another resident's backyard. They said this arrangement was good for them and for the other family. Mos and Keej would share their produce, and in return, the property owners would help water the vegetables. As the city population grew and traffic increased, however, Mos and Keej found that they were spending two hours each day just trying to

drive between the garden locations. They were working full-time and gardening in the evenings and weekends. To save time and expand production, they decided to buy a larger piece of property where they could garden in one location. The participants said that they or their parents worked several jobs, saved money and were eventually able to rent and buy larger pieces of land in Missoula County, sometimes with support through extended family. Choj's son, Teeb, explained how his uncles collectively purchased 20 acres and divided it up between each of the families. He said, "As far as tilling, planting and weeding, [each family] does their own thing," but if a family has surplus produce that they cannot sell or use, they will share it with the extended family.

Many of the participants also rely on their kinship and ethnic networks to continue growing traditional produce and share knowledge regarding the medicinal uses of plants. Kiab, for instance, explained that her parents brought the seeds of mustard greens with them from Laos, but her family also depended on seed exchanges with her aunt in Billings, Montana, and other Hmong Americans in the community. She recalled:

Whenever we went to Billings it was a seed exchange or like, grow this for this kind of pain, so it always started off with a few seeds in a pot in our house and then eventually you would just transplant them outside in the summer . . . A lot of it was just, you know, you met up because there was a funeral or a family gathering and you exchanged seeds or you talked about . . . "Oh, grow this 'cause it helps with the . . ." and then next thing you know, we're growing it . . . so someone had the seeds or just brought it over [from Laos]. So either way, the seeds existed and we just kept growing the stuff.

Her parents and other Hmong Americans wanted to continue growing the vegetables they had eaten in Laos, and many of these plants were also needed to maintain traditional medicinal practices. They were, however, hard to find in seed and grocery stores in the early 80s. For example, lemongrass, cilantro, bok choy and mustard greens have become

more popular and can often be found in health food stores today. But when Kiab was a child, she said that these herbs and vegetables were difficult to find unless they grew it. Her family saved seeds each season, and they continue this practice, especially with seeds that are rare or hold significant value. Several of the participants said that they were able to grow quite a few of the same vegetables they had in Laos. Of course, rice production, most tropical fruits and water buffalo are not viable in Montana, but Ci and his family are attempting to grow bananas inside their home. Additionally, chickens are an important part of the traditional Hmong diet, and they are also needed for many ceremonies. Until 2007, residents in Missoula were unable to raise hens, and without access to larger land outside city limits, Hmong families struggled to find farmers from whom they could buy them.

Growing up in Missoula County

The second-generation Hmong American participants shared more diverse experiences in their agricultural backgrounds in comparison to the first generation. Out of the six second-generation male participants, two did not help grow food when they were children, and of the four who were involved, only two remain significantly involved as adults. The others are somewhat involved and help with preparation for market, which includes washing, bundling and packing produce. Out of the four second-generation women participants, all of them were involved in growing food at a young age. Three continue to be significantly involved while one is somewhat involved.

One of the male participants, Michael, said that he did not help his family grow food at all. He is the youngest of six children, and while his older siblings worked in the garden, he said that his parents never asked him to help. He was, however, expected to

assist on farmers' market days and continues to do this while attending the University of Montana (UM). Yeej, also a student at UM, has mostly helped his family with preparation for farmers' markets but lacks experience growing produce. He explained, "I mainly help out [with] the process of getting the vegetables from our house to the farmers' market, and I know nothing about the growing process or the greenhouse process – that's all my parents."

Meej, on the other hand, began helping his parents in the garden when he was five years old. Now that he is in graduate school, his parents want him to focus on his studies. "It's not like they tell me, 'You need to do this,'" said Meej. "It's more like, if you have time, you can help; they do a lot so I definitely don't mind helping." Teeb also began at a young age, and since he works fulltime, he mostly helps his parents when he has time. Both Frank and Foom started working in their families' gardens when they were around the age of 11, and they are currently very involved. After graduating from high school, Foom moved to Denver where many of his mother's relatives live. Two years later, he decided the "big city life" was not what he wanted, and he recently returned to Missoula. While he is working and preparing to enroll at UM, he also helps his family grow food and sell at the farmers' markets. Each year, his mom starts the seedlings in their greenhouses, and – except for the two years while he was in Denver – Foom helps his family transplant them outside and assists with the weeding and watering. Suab, a senior in high school, also helps her family on their farm. She stated:

I don't do the major work. I mostly, like, when the planting season comes around, that's when . . . all my siblings come in, and then that's when we start planting everything. The boys are usually digging up the holes, and we are just usually planting. And then, when the garden starts flourishing, mostly my parents are working on it 'cause usually we are the ones washing the vegetables and drying them, but we do pick beans and peas sometimes.

The fifth participant, Kiab, was very involved in farming throughout her youth and said that she learned how to grow food from her mother. Kiab has a degree from UM, two full-time jobs and her own family farm near Frenchtown that she manages with her husband. While she was attending UM, she did not help as much during the spring and fall, but she always returned to work on the farm in the summer. Two other young women, Paj and KajSiab were very involved in growing food when they were growing up and still continue to help their parents throughout the week. Paj has a fulltime job and KajSiab attends Missoula College.

Challenges and Strategies to Grow Food

Climate

In addition to land access issues, the participants explained that another significant adaptation during the early years of resettlement was adjusting to the drastically different growing conditions. Kub explained:

Back in Laos, you always have that very hot season, very hot and humid and so you don't pay attention too much to what kind of weather it is. Over here, the challenge is the weather . . . overnight, things can frost out and everything will die out.

For the participants and their families involved in growing food in Missoula County, the short growing season and weather (e.g., frost, temperature fluctuations, low rainfall) continue to be challenges, but they have developed numerous strategies to address these. During the early years, Kub explained that they relied primarily on learning through trial and error. He provided an example:

I remember one year we started gardening in March, and we start watering every single day throughout the week; after a couple weeks, everything [was] dying

out 'cause it [was] cold overnight and even though it's hot during the day, at night . . . the ground [was] actually freezing . . . You have to really pay attention to night and day's temperatures.

In addition to paying close attention to weather forecasts, all of the participants have one or more greenhouses to start seedlings early in spring. This is particularly important if they want to have produce ready to sell the first weekend in May at the farmers' markets. If a night is predicted to be very cold, several of the participants said that they wrap the seedlings in a second layer of plastic or frost cloth and place a small heater in the greenhouse. Once the seedlings are transplanted in the ground, the participants cover the plants if night temperatures are expected to drop. Before Choj's family had a greenhouse, they would cover seedlings with plastic cups and weigh down the edges with soil to prevent them from blowing off in the wind.

Kiab said the biggest challenge for her is the uncertainty of the coming year and not knowing what her family will be able to grow.

Last year we lost all of our garlic . . . and it was because our winter was so mild . . . 'cause we didn't get the snow that we needed to cover the ground. And I just knew the garlic was not going to make it. So that's the challenge. You order all this stuff. You work hard to transplant or plant, and some doesn't take. And it's not the animals. We don't have a lot of problems with the animals. It's just whatever Mother Nature decides isn't going to work. So you just have to suck it up and try again next year.

With the semi-arid climate of Missoula County, irrigation is necessary to grow most produce. The participants mentioned that their families have access to irrigation ditches or wells, and while most did not say water was a challenge, several did stress that finding property with a water source is critical to grow food in this climate. Teeb explained how his parents did not look into water rights when they bought their land near Frenchtown.

My parents have a naturally running creek, but they don't have the water rights to it, which is unfortunate. When they built the house, they didn't look into it so what my parents did was, at our house, the groundwater is fairly shallow so they installed another water pump to get the groundwater.

Participants from two families also said that water in the irrigation ditches is not always available in the early spring when they need to water seedlings. In Missoula County's semi-arid climate, most gardens require irrigation twice a day, but this may not be possible during dry summers. For example, Teeb's parents will alternate between watering the potatoes and the rest of the garden when water is limited.

Land

All of the participants' families own or rent land, but some have plots in two or three locations. This means that additional time is required to travel between the various sites and more attention is needed to predict the weather and protect the plants accordingly. Foom's family plants the varieties that are more sensitive to frost in the plot closest to their home to mitigate this issue, but Ci said that farming became much easier when they were able to buy one piece of large land to manage instead of owning or renting several smaller plots. Kub also stated, "Unless you have your own property, it's really hard to find a good place with a good ground to grow vegetables." While the participants said that soil quality was not an issue for them, a few mentioned that some of their neighbors have garden plots with rocky, poor-quality soil. The participants said that their families use crop rotations to maintain soil health, as well.

Pests

While most of the participants did not view pests as a problem, Frank said gophers are the greatest challenge to growing food. His family has installed fences

around the garden, which keep the deer out, but gophers still manage to get in. “They eat the tops and sometimes when they make their holes, they kind of destroy the roots,” said Frank. “We will try to add dirt [in the tunnels] to make sure they can't come out, throw rocks in there – they still just dig their way around.” Kiab mentioned that deer and skunks are problematic in Missoula, while birds and mice are the main concern on her family farm near Frenchtown. Accordingly, they grow varieties that are less prone to attack, and they plant extra to offset losses. Kiab stated:

Birds are the worst because they will just go up and peck the top of each ear of corn. And deer, we've learned never to grow any type of lettuce. We can grow kale but lettuce types in town – deer just take little bites out each one so . . . we don't grow that any more. Skunks are notorious for corn. They will knock down corn and steal the corn, too. So it just kind of depends on the plant. And then, the space out in Frenchtown – birds are the biggest issues. Mice like to steal seeds. So that's one we always fight with. You can't leave seeds around . . . But you have to prepare for it. We know we are going to lose some crops so we just plant two extra rows in preparation for the animals taking some of it.

When Foom was prompted about pests during the interview, he mentioned that slugs can sometimes attach to the base of cabbages, but in general, insects and other pests are not an issue for his family. Participants from two other families have had significant issues with deer as well. In 2013, however, epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) reduced the deer population, and Mos and Keej said they have not had a problem since then (Wilson 2013). Another family uses pericord to create a fence around vegetables from deer. Teej explained that a lot of farmers in the area use electric fences, and the deer assume that the pericord is also electric.

Chickens

Fifteen of the 19 participants said that their families have chickens. In addition to providing protein and being used for rituals, chickens supply fertilizer for the garden beds and consume food waste. They also mitigate pest damage by eating insects and mice. With Missoula's chicken ordinance in 2007, residents living in the city are allowed up to six hens, but this is unlikely to meet all of the dietary and ceremonial needs for the average Hmong American family. Because of this, those who live within city limits depend largely on extended family and the Hmong community to provide chickens. Most have a few dozen, but Kiab's family raises 300-400 chickens each year on their farm. They use the chickens for eggs and fertilizer during the summer, and at the end of the season, Kiab's family butchers and processes them for household consumption, friends and relatives. Foom mentioned that his family had pigs for a while, but "they were too messy." They decided to focus on chicken production instead.

Equipment

In addition to the climate, pests and regulations, equipment costs are also considerable barriers to growing food. Small tractors, rototillers, greenhouses, heaters, plastic plant covers, irrigation pumps and pipes are significant – but also necessary – expenses to grow and sell produce for profit in a semi-arid climate with a short growing season. Teeb's uncles collectively bought land that was divided into smaller sections for each family to farm. He explained:

So it started with hand tools. And then eventually someone went out and bought an actual motorized tiller by hand and everyone borrowed it and shared it. And then there used to be this place that would rent out tractors so a lot of the aunts and uncles would go to that one place, and we would rent from that one guy ...

Over time, the families transitioned from sharing tools and tractors to purchasing their own. “I don’t know if it’s a status symbol, or if it’s just easier to have your own,” said Teeb. “They didn’t have to rely on each other so much anymore, and it kind of got more independent.”

Several participants said that they bought their greenhouses from Costco or an online farming store, and a few explained that they also built smaller hoop houses, as well. In Community Food Assessment (2004), Hmong American participants expressed interest in learning how to extend the growing season with greenhouses and heaters. Keej said large greenhouse kits were around \$4,000 in 2006 when they bought their first one in 2006. Now, they are around \$7,000 to \$8,000, but Keej believes greenhouses are necessary in order to sell produce in the spring. Considering all 17 of the produce-selling participants currently have greenhouses, it is highly probable that other Hmong American growers in Missoula County have also acquired these. The two participants who do not use greenhouses, Michael and Liag, do not sell produce.

Time

Lastly, time requirements are one of the biggest challenges to growing food because most of the participants have other employment, school or family responsibilities. Three of the participants assist family members with their gardening and farm work in addition to their own. Ci mentioned several times that having enough time to farm was his biggest challenge. During the weekday, he works from 5 am to 2:30 pm, while his wife works from 2 pm to midnight. Mos and Keej said they could grow more if they were not working full-time. Yeej, a second generation participant, also expressed

that good time management is needed to assist his family with gardening while attending university, Hmong ceremonies and weekly culture classes.

Conclusion to Agricultural Experiences

The current challenges to growing food – the short growing season, unpredictable weather, land access and limited time – are consistent with the results from the CFA focus-group study (McCourt et al. 2004). While drought was mentioned in the CFA report, only three of the participants from my study expressed low precipitation as a significant issue. The CFA report also stated that participants in the focus-group study wanted to learn how to extend the growing season by acquiring greenhouses and heaters. The responses from all of the participants in 2016 indicate that this is no longer a challenge since the families who produce food have greenhouses and heaters. They bought greenhouse kits and built them themselves. Learning through trial and error, support and knowledge sharing through kin, and the use of infrastructure and equipment are the primary strategies to overcome some of the challenges to grow food. Without being prompted, all of the participants expressed that agriculture is “a lot of hard work.”

Selling Experiences of the Participants

Beyond the family: growing food for Missoula County

Chinwon Reinhardt and Mavis McKilvey founded the Missoula Farmers’ Market in 1970 (Bradford 2003). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of the first-generation Hmong Americans were producing more than enough food to meet their household needs, and Reinhardt and McKilvey needed vendors. Paj recalled:

They reached out to the Hmong community 'cause we were all gardening, and they asked us to gather vegetables to sell. At the beginning, they made tables for

us, gave us tablecloths, and eventually we made our own tables and brought our own stuff.

Mos thought perhaps the farmers' market staff reached out to Lao Family Community first, and then the organization contacted food growers in the Hmong American community. "We held an educational workshop for [the Hmong American vendors] every year for a few years to acquaint them of what sells well, what seeds would do better in our growing conditions and how to present their produce to attract shoppers," said the market's co-founder, Chinwon (Bradford 2003). "It took a season or two for them to become completely integrated into the ranks of vendors, but there is no denying that they have become a very important part of our market, without whose contribution of first-rate organic vegetables, our market would not be such a wonderful place." Keej said his mother was one of the first Hmong American vendors at the Missoula Farmers' Market.

When we first come here is '82, and I think '83 and '84, my mom and other lady was the first Hmong people selling at the Missoula market. At that time, they offer table and things for my mom. You don't have to take your table. You go there, and they have table – but it was tiniest table! People start coming, and one weekend, maybe got \$20, \$50 because at that time my mom sell 25 cent a bundle. After so long, more people come and see and buy, and it building up, building up.

In 2003, about 40% of the vendors at the Missoula Farmers' Market were Hmong American (Bradford 2003). Since then, Missoula has gained the Clark Fork Market, the Orchard Homes' Farmers' Market and the Target Range Farmers' Market. Littlebird's Marketplace in Seeley Lake, a town northeast of Missoula, also sells produce; however, most of the vendors sell artisan products and crafts. This study found approximately 40% of the produce vendors in Missoula County is Hmong American. It is important to note that during Bradford's data collection in 2003, there was only one farmers' market, and it predominantly centered on produce. Since then, it has relaxed its regulations as new

farmers' markets have begun to offer non-produce items (e.g., meat, cheese, and soap). When including all of the vendors at the farmers' markets in Missoula County, Hmong American vendors constitute around 18%.

Several of the participants or family members also travel to farmers' markets beyond Missoula County, even as far as Butte and Great Falls, which require several hours of driving to reach. In addition to farmers' markets, Kiab's family sells produce to several restaurants and caterers in the area, and she mentioned that smoothie shops have been particularly interested in buying from her. Mos works full-time at a restaurant and often supplies it with surplus produce (e.g., cabbages, hot peppers and cilantro) from their farm. During the interview with Foom, he said many Hmong American families forage for huckleberries in the summer as well. He explained that they sell to a factory that makes jams, candies and other huckleberry-flavored foods, but they prefer selling at the farmers' markets where they can set their own prices and earn a higher profit.

Some of the participants who sell produce also donate to food banks at the end of the market day. For example, Hli said that her family alone donates a thousand pounds of fruits and vegetables to the Great Falls Farmers' Market each year. Mos and Keej said more vendors used to donate to the food bank in Missoula, but it has become much harder in recent years. Keej said:

Back four-five years ago, there was a lady working for the Missoula Food Bank who was really good, and she would come and people would give a lot. But after she quit, the other come in, and they just not coming around a lot. People don't know them, and where they are so that's why they kind of - I don't think they get as much as that other lady did. It's not the problem that people don't giving, but they don't know who's coming, where they are. We used to give to them; one time we had a cabbage – 70 lbs – I called them [to] pick up. Second year, called them, and they said, "Oh, we don't have time."

For a few years, Mos and Keej loaded up a pick-up truck with extra produce from their farm and drove it to the Missoula Food Bank. However, Keej said it was too much work to continue doing this while working full time, growing food and selling at the farmers' market. They decided to scale back production and give extra produce to their neighbors.

While none of the first generation Hmong American participants sold food in Laos, all 19 participants have experience preparing and selling at the farmers' markets in Missoula. The second-generation participants attended the markets as children, and over time, they took on more responsibilities. Suab recalled:

I was four when I first started going to the [farmers'] market. I would just mess around with the little kids. We would just play around in the market, and we would go to vendor booths and the bakery and the candy area. But it wasn't until I was understanding math and money, around third grade, when I was around eight, when I started to help my mom. Back then I just greeted customers mostly and bagged their items for them . . . but now I'm mostly the one greeting customers and selling vegetables and translating when the person doesn't know what a food is or vegetable.

Kiab began helping her parents sell produce at the Missoula Farmers' Market when she was five years old. Similar to Suab, her primary duties included wiping off the tables, greeting customers and placing produce in bags. She said that she was probably more of a nuisance than help, but when she turned seven, her parents decided that she was ready to have her own table to sell produce and earn some money. Kiab explained:

So I have an older sister, two older sisters and a brother. They got to sell at their own table when they got to a certain age, and I was like, 'I want to have my own table.' Because whatever we made from that, we got to keep, like three or four dollars . . . so at [age] seven, I was like, 'I think I'm ready.' And you had to be ready. My parents weren't going to just let us set up, so you had to be ready . . . everything was like 50 cents, or maybe cheaper . . . so it was easy math . . . And I've been doing it ever since.

In fact, the summer of 2016 was her 28th year selling at the farmers' market. She still competes with her siblings to see who can sell the highest quantity and earn the most money. Kiab's family was one of the first vendors to take a chance and break away from the Missoula Farmers' Market to start selling at the Clark Fork Market. She recalled that it took four to five years to attract more vendors and customers, but now it is flourishing.

While all 19 of the participants have been and are currently involved in selling food at farmers' markets, Liag and her son Michael sell prepared food – a fusion of Chinese and Thai – instead of produce. Before Michael was born, Liag and her husband moved from Missoula to Milwaukee and bought a 72-acre farm. They sold produce to a distributor while other Hmong Americans in the community visited their farm to buy vegetables and pork. Eventually, Liag's family began selling at a nearby farmers' market as well. When Michael was an infant, they decided to return to Missoula for personal and family reasons, and today, they just have a small garden for household use.

Challenges and Strategies to Sell Food

Competition

According to nine of the 19 participant responses, the greatest challenge to selling food is competition among vendors at the farmers' markets in Missoula since they generally sell the same variety of produce. This is consistent with the participants' responses in the 2004 CFA with Hmong American market vendors (McCourt et al.). While Hli mentioned that competition was problematic, she also said that without variety, customers choose to buy from another vendor.

The biggest challenge is you have to have everything. If you don't have everything on your table [at the farmers' market], [the customers] come and look

it, you don't have everything what they needed, they go somewhere [else]. That's the biggest challenge here. You have [to have] the most vegetable.

Several other participants mentioned this as well, indicating that specialization is not a viable strategy to create a niche market in response to competition. According to Teeb, selling one or two items would require a different market. “We could specialize in one item and just sell to [the Good Food Store in Missoula] each week,” but he suspects his parents would miss the social aspect of the market. Hli used to sell at the Missoula Farmers’ Market, but now she drives three hours to Great Falls where there are “lots of vendors, too, but most of the vendors . . . sell different” produce. Other participants mentioned that they sell in Missoula, while family members travel to Butte, Helena and other cities in Montana. This strategy – using family support to sell at multiple markets – is a common practice. For example, Foom and his father sell their family’s produce at the Clark Fork River Farmers’ Market, while his mother manages a stand at the Missoula Farmers’ Market.

The participants mentioned pricing and aesthetics as additional strategies to sell produce. While the prices are usually comparable among the vendors and relatively stable year-to-year, offering a larger quantity or higher quality are commonplace practices. Suab explained:

We go around and we look at each other’s prices to match up. We communicate like how much are you selling your lettuce for, then we match it from that. It's all about the customer's preference for vegetables, I guess. So if they come and look at it and see that our vegetables are more green or they get a better deal, then they come buy ours. It's kind of like a game, I guess. Like, trying to keep the price the same but try and attract the most customers, by adding more quantity to it.

Suab mentioned that over the years, her family learned that placing produce in bowls and baskets and using certain color combinations seemed to attract customers, as well. Teeb's father, Choj, sorts the produce by size. He believes customers prefer this system because it is easier to prepare food (i.e., consistent cooking time). KajSiab said she tries to make her signs colorful and attractive while Kiab suspects that some customers are more likely to buy from a vendor if their children are helping. She said, "People think they're cute – you know, young kid selling produce from a farm."

Several of the participants' families forage for huckleberries and sell them at the farmers' markets. Frank said the biggest challenge is when another vendor drops the price, and they have to stay consistent with it. "We went out this week to pick berries, and is it worth us selling for like \$5 a pound or \$3 a pound?" He explained, "It's not worth it if you think about gas and everything. You got to break even and make a profit." During a year when there are a lot of huckleberries, the price is around \$2 to \$3 per pound, but when there are not as many berries, the price can rise to \$7 to \$10 per pound. Foom said people also sell to the huckleberry factory in Missoula, but "you have to sell at their price – what they want to buy it for." By investing in coolers to preserve the berries, families can earn a higher profit by selling directly to customers at the farmers' market.

Michael and his mother Liag sell Chinese and Thai food at the Clark Fork River Farmers' Market, and they were concerned when one of Asian restaurants began offering bubble tea and fried rice at the market as well. Since then, they have decided to stop selling fried rice and have added new items to the menu. Michael explained that they also provide more food for a lower price, and he claims to make the best bubble tea in western Montana. Occasionally, they have had problems with electrical shortages when they are

using the warmers, blenders and refrigerator at the same time. The cost of ingredients, chicken in particular, can also be a challenge for Michael and his mother Liag. They set a goal of making \$1000 at each farmers' market to ensure these expenses are covered. Most of the produce and poultry are bought from grocery stores, but they buy carrots, cabbage and other produce from their relatives whenever possible.

Five of the participants felt like another challenge was competition between the two major farmers' markets in Missoula. Ci and Foom believe that some customers had stopped coming to the Missoula Farmers' Market to attend the Clark Fork River Farmers' Market instead. "For a while ... there was definitely a decrease in the income people got [at the Missoula Farmers' Market], but it got to the point where it eventually evened out," said Teeb. "Both the Clark Fork and the Missoula [markets] have customers that go back and forth. It's a great thing – the more, the merrier." Kub expressed that having two markets was a benefit. When there was only the Missoula Farmers' Market, there was not enough space for all of the food producers to participate. The limited number of vendor spots was also mentioned in the 2004 CFA report (McCourt et al.). Now, with two markets, Kub and Kiab said that more vendors are able to sell each week. When asked if competition between the two markets was an issue, Kiab responded:

No, there's room for it in Missoula. I haven't seen it. I think the other market, maybe they've lost some of their vendors, but I think they are building it back up. There's plenty of room here. What's happening now is, all these farmers' markets – it's kind of trendy, too. So they are really popular, and I think people are becoming more aware that they can get locally-produced produce, and so there's growing support here in Missoula for that. That's why they're both so successful.

The participants also expressed that the vendors and their families are all very supportive of one another. For example, Yeej did not think competition was an issue at all, stating, "I

feel like it's just 'cause we see everyone else as friends or family.” The participants said they also have close relationships with their customers, the farmers’ market board and staff. Many of the participants shared that their customers have been buying their produce week after week, year after year. Hli explained:

I have regular customer. They always come to my table. They always say, ‘We don't need to go anywhere; here, you have everything.’ They just say that. Then they happy to see us sell vegetable there, and the most important – the market master – and all the board there, they like us. They nice to us, and then they say thank you to come here to support our market.

Kiab said that they never try to miss selling at a market or else they will get calls and e-mails from the regular customers who are concerned as to why they did not attend. She said this goes both ways and that they also worry if they do not see their regular customers one weekend. Foom’s parents have been travelling to Butte to sell at the farmers’ market since the early 1990’s. He explained, “They love going to Butte; Butte's not that big, and it's usually the regulars, too, and so they pretty much know so many people in Butte.” Most market vendors need loyal customers to maintain economic viability, which helps justify the time and expenses required to sell at farmers’ markets.

Certification

To attract new customers, some of the first and second-generation participants have considered organic certification. All 19 of the participants said that their families use organic growing methods without any chemicals, but no one is currently certified. Ci explained that one of his friends has a certification. The friend did not, however, experience an increase in customers at his farmers’ market stand, and Ci believes the potential to attract more customers is not high enough to justify paying for the organic certification. Foom said that it is an issue of availability more than the cost. He said, “I

think it's that most people don't want to deal with that – having people come over all the time and looking at stuff and always having to have a certain time for the Health Department people to come to your garden . . . During summertime, everyone's always just working, and it's not just farming.” Kiab has a similar perception and believes that the language barrier also plays a role. In the past, her parents had an organic certification and sold produce to a local grocery store, but after a few years, they decided not to re-certify. She explained:

I think the most concerning part was because [the inspectors] would come from Helena and they would come unannounced, and I think it was more just the inconvenience because my parents didn't know when they were coming and maybe there was a little bit of a language barrier there and some issues around that and just like receiving a bill in the mail that they didn't understand. So I think it was just too overwhelming for them at one point. So they were [certified] for a few years and they just decided, ‘We're farmers, and we're just going to farm.’

While Kiab and her husband have considered getting an organic certification, she appreciates customers who ask questions about their farming practices rather than whether or not they are certified. To Kiab, this signifies that the customers genuinely care about their health and environmental impacts from agriculture.

Another issue is poor access to a certified chicken processing facility. The participants who farm in the countryside raise 30 to 400 chickens, but they are unable to sell poultry legally unless it has been butchered and processed in an approved facility. Kiab explained that customers at the Clark Fork Market have been requesting poultry, and she is hopeful that the new cooperative poultry processing plant in Hamilton, a city south of Missoula, will enable them to start selling at the end of 2016.

Preparation

All of the participants mentioned that preparation for farmers' markets requires a significant amount of time and labor. While some spend all day Friday with the preparations, two of the participants, Hli and Kiab, said that they begin as early as Wednesday. Because Hli sells at the farmers' market in Great Falls, she and her family finish preparing and loading the produce around midnight each Friday, and then at 1:30 am, she and her husband drive to Great Falls to set up and sell the next morning. From the interview responses, most of the harvesting is done by the parents, while their children primarily cut, wash, bundle and pack the produce into coolers or cardboard boxes.

A few participants mentioned that they have large commercial coolers to keep the produce fresh for market, and Hli plans on building a walk-in cooler this year. Meej said the end of the season is particularly challenging when there is more to harvest and the sun sets earlier. He said, "You come home from work or school, [and] it's already dark so we turn on lights to wash everything and get everything prepped." During the spring and late fall, frost can actually damage some of the produce at the farmers' markets. Huab and KajSiab cover produce with a blanket or keep it in the car until it is warm enough to display it on their table.

Conclusion

Growing, preparing and selling food require significant time-commitments and labor. The Hmong American participants and their families, however, have long been motivated to engage in these practices. By understanding some of their motivations, the

study demonstrates how food producers – especially recent refugees and immigrants – and the community can both benefit from an inclusive local food system.

Motivations to Grow and Sell Food

Household Food and Maintaining Traditions

While the primary motivations of the participants to grow and sell food are diverse and have evolved since the late 1970's, several commonalities emerge. During the early years of resettlement, gardens provided Hmong families with household food while supporting their dietary, medicinal and ceremonial traditions. They enabled the participants and other Hmong Americans to save money and improve food security while preserving – to a certain degree – how they had lived in Laos. The participants explained that traditional Hmong food is very simple. A meal typically consists of boiled vegetables with rice and maybe some chicken or pork. Usually the only seasoning is salt. Michael laughed when he explained:

I hate to say it, but we're like the non-exciting Asians I guess. 'Cause you look at Chinese, and it's like sweet and sour chicken, kung pao beef. But ours is just very simple, and I think this goes back to where we're from 'cause in Laos, a lot of families in Laos are really, really poor. So to have meat is like a luxury.

Paj would probably disagree that Hmong food is boring. When mustard greens are available in spring, her family boils it with pork and serves it with rice. “It's the best comfort food,” said Paj. “It reminds me of home.” Liag cooks traditional Hmong food for her family but also Chinese and Thai, and many of the other participants mentioned that they eat a lot of fusion food and typical American fare as well. Paj often cooks for her parents and younger brother. She explained:

When my mom and dad are home, I always make sure there's rice, a vegetable broth of some kind, and a meat dish and vegetable dish for them. When it's just me and my brother, I'll do whatever is easiest ... My parents travel a lot during the winter so sometimes it will just be me and my brother and we'll eat pasta for a week, and then I'll be like, "I'm craving rice." And so I'll make rice and a meat dish or broth dish for us ... Some households are very strict on what they eat, but with us, my mom and dad are super flexible so on days when I don't want to cook ... I'll pick up some pizza, hot dogs, or burgers. So we switch it up, but almost nightly, we have rice.

Teeb said his family always has a dish of minced hot chili peppers with their meals as well. "We'll toss a little garlic, salt and water into it, and that's an added dish to flavor the vegetables," he explained. "When [my parents] were younger, they didn't have a lot of salt or pepper so the hot pepper would flavor the food." Even if their family has pasta for dinner, they always have rice, vegetable broth and the hot chili pepper dish on the table. Several of the participants said that their families hunted and fished in Laos and continue these practices today in western Montana.

Kiab's parents began growing their own produce because they were not familiar with traditional American style food and wanted to continue their medicinal practices. She said, "As a family, it was just a way to keep growing what my parents were used to eating when they were in Laos – like the greens and the medicine." Kiab's family regularly grew and used Asian garlic chives, lemongrass, Asian watercress and kefir leaves. She explained:

We were eating [it] and also using it for medicinal purposes so anytime I smell lemongrass, or if I smell kefir lime leaves, it's like childhood because that's all we had. And we mixed it in with our food and had it as medicine, and that wasn't really here at all in Missoula when I was growing up.

Kiab recalled that her childhood home was filled with plants in glasses of water or pots with soil.

If you walk into a traditional Hmong house, you will see that there are plants everywhere. And there's a reason for those plants. They're not decorative flowers. There's a reason behind every plant, and there's a use for them.

Whenever Kiab's sister had stomachaches, her mother would cut up some of these plants and make a tea for her. Kiab explained, "You just learn as you go, and it's not recorded. You learn by watching, they tell you, or by experience." For example, when Kiab was expecting her first child, her mother told her to cook a particular plant with chicken during and after her pregnancy to help her heal. While some of the participants mentioned that their families have medicinal herbs and plants, Hli said she did not, and Foom explained that his parents buy dried plants when visiting relatives in California instead of growing them.

Today, all participants and their families still use fresh produce from their gardens or farms for household consumption, and they regularly freeze fruits and vegetables to eat throughout winter. Many of the families continue to grow traditional vegetables from Laos and stressed the importance of having chickens – not only for food but also for ceremonies, some of which involve animal sacrifices. Foom explained, "We use a lot of chickens. We usually use two, and it's pretty much to have the spirits come and eat with us, like the ancestors to come and help us, protect us." Occasionally, pigs are also used, but Foom, Suab and Ci said it depends on the ritual. Foom said, "You really have to ask the shaman, the one who is doing the [ritual]. Chickens are a must, but then sometimes we need a cow or a pig and a cow."

Kub believes Hmong culture has a strong connection to agriculture and hopes the traditions will continue. He explained that one of his main motivations to grow food is to show his parents that he can still do it. "If they [are] not here, I [will] still keep this

gardening going,” Kub stated. “For me, it's . . . to show my parents that I will keep the tradition going. Kub and his wife are teaching their children these skills as well.

That's why we keeping going, and even right now we doing gardening, teaching our kids, too. It's the thing we do, and explain to them what we done and why we are doing so the kids can start to picking up some of ... the tradition of, you know, family that have been done for many, many generation and hopefully they can keep it going or they can go with the mainstream.

Liag and Hli said that mothers play a crucial role in keeping the agricultural tradition going. Liag said, “When you like ten-years old, mother’s always teaching you the right things and how do you plant and how do you cook it.” They both linked a woman’s value as a wife and mother with her ability to provide food and sew clothes for the family. “For us, in our culture, the mother always teach the girl because you are women, and when you grow up, you have to marry,” Liag stated. “You have to be a wife.”

Paj, who was born in Missoula, said she learned how to grow food from her mother. “She feels like she's taught me enough so that if I was to start my own garden, I would have an idea how to do it,” said Paj. While she does not necessarily expect or want Paj to grow and sell food in the future, she does want her daughter to know how to cook and kill a chicken. Paj laughed as she said:

[My mom]'s like, “How are you ever going to kill a chicken for your mother-in-law?” And I'm like, “Mom, what if I don't marry a Hmong guy?” “OK, but if you do marry a Hmong guy, and you can't kill a chicken, do you know how that will look on me?” And I'm like, "Then I'll make sure he knows how to kill a chicken."

While traditional gender roles may remain strong with some in the first generation, these expectations are beginning to shift, especially as more Hmong American women earn college degrees and seek careers.

Yeej and Suab believe the role of agriculture in Hmong culture is important but held more value in the past. Yeej explained, “It's like part of the Hmong identity – culture – but then, it's slowly changing.” Similarly, Suab said, “I think it's more of a cultural thing for my parents and my elders because that's what they grew up knowing how to do it, but for the younger generation, I think we are drifting off more into school, careers, jobs, stuff like that.” In conclusion, these responses reflect a transition between first and second generation Hmong Americans and what it means to ‘be Hmong’ in the US. Household food and ceremonial requirements, however, remain significant motivations for all of the participants’ or their families to grow produce and raise chickens.

Self-reliance

Many participants mentioned that Hmong people are hardworking and either stated or implied that self-reliance is highly valued. In line with maintaining traditions, another motivation to grow food is to continue a self-reliant lifestyle and instill this in their children. The second-generation participants expressed this as well. Michael said:

When they were in Laos, where we were originally from . . . it's really poor there so nobody's a doctor. Nobody's a teacher. All they do is farm. So when our parents came here, you know, they still had the mindset of farming because . . . it just kind of goes down the bloodline of just farming here. Yes, I do think farming is important. It's who we are, and we've always done it. I guess, it's just something farming created . . . made us who we are. And how I look at this, farming is a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication . . . And that reflects us as a people. Hmong people are really hard working. We are driven. We can take on anything, basically.

Suab, Kiab and Yeej also mentioned that farming requires a lot of hard work and believe a history of subsistence agriculture has influenced Hmong values. Kiab explained:

I've always paired farming with Hmong. Hmong people here farm . . . I think farming is such an important piece to the Hmong community because really

truly they grow stuff, like greens, for themselves. It's how they are able to grow what they need. And Hmong people are also very money conscious, and it's because they didn't have much [in Laos]. Coming here, they didn't have much of anything. So any way of being able to save and not spend, and any way they can grow their own and know that they grew it because that is still who they are because [they] are still very independent. You're self-sufficient, you know, you're self-sustaining. So when I think about the Hmong people, that's who they are as a culture – independent, self-sustaining.

Ntaub seemed particularly concerned about climate change and the need to be prepared.

She expressed a desire to teach her children, especially her daughters and daughters-in-law how to grow food and sew clothes for the family. She stated:

Someday, if the Mother Earth is changed and you have to grow your own food, you have to know a little bit about that to survive to start it. So that's what I teach my children. They say, "No, mom. It [will] never happen." And I say, "You don't know. You cannot control the weather, you know."

Kiab expressed a need to be ready for change as well. She has a college degree and two full-time jobs, but she said, "I have the skills to make it on my own; if all goes to hell, if I lose my job, I know how to plant a garden, and I'll make it." Foom stated that if he has kids, he would like to have a small farm or a large garden to teach them where their food comes from, how to grow and harvest it and "not only have to rely on stores to get their food." Considering that many of the participants or their parents underwent extreme hardship and upheaval in Laos during the 1970's, the need to be self-reliant and resilient seems to remain a central motivation.

Supplemental Income

Eighteen out of the 19 participants said that selling food provides an important source of supplemental income for their families. Ci, Choj, Mos and Keej said that they need the extra income to help pay for their children's college tuitions. Suab, Ci's teenage

daughter, suspects that her parents will continue to grow food, but they may stop selling at the farmers' market once she completes a college degree. With financially independent children, the need for the participants and their families to sell food for supplemental income decreases. Foom, Michael and Yeej said that earning extra income was particularly important during the early years of resettlement when it was difficult for their parents to find full-time jobs that paid enough to support the family. Foom stated:

The only one growing up who really had a job was my dad. So I think the farmers' market was a way for my mom and everybody to help support the family growing up 'cause a lot of people used to live in apartments . . . and I think gardening and selling vegetables at the farmers' market was a huge help . . . The adults, they're not very good at English, so it was really hard to get jobs and really hard to do stuff . . . So I think it was just a really big help to save up money to buy houses and move out to new places.

Kiab mentioned that if she and her husband paid themselves minimum wage for all of the hours they put into farming, however, the farm would not earn a profit. For many of the participants, the motivation to grow and sell food goes beyond generating income.

Enjoyment

Almost all of the participants expressed a sense of enjoyment from growing food. Two of the first generation Hmong American women, Ntaub and Hli, and one of the second generation women, Kiab, especially emphasized that this is a main motivation to work in a garden or on a farm. Kiab explained:

As a small family business, you just kind of count your blessings that you had a good growing season, you got to eat some good vegetables, you got to store some good vegetables over the winter. So a little bit of it has to do with money, but at the same time, I'm like, I have two other full time jobs. What am I doing? So I do it because I love it, and my husband loves it. So it's the love of growing your own produce and farming and reaping the fruit benefits.

Ntaub said that older people “love to plant” and benefit from the exercise. She explained, “You know, you feel happy when you grow, from the seeds in the ground and when they sprout and come up so it's kind of exciting and pretty so you feel happy for that so that's why.” Hli and Liag also expressed a sense of joy and fulfillment from gardening, and Kub stated, “I just like to garden – it's just something I am passionate about, something I have been doing for so long with my parents and something I wanted to keep it going, you know.” Ntaub and many other participants felt that the younger generation did not appreciate or enjoy growing food, but two of the participants, Foom and Kiab provided alternative viewpoints.

Foom said that he viewed gardening as a chore when he was a teen, but now he likes it, saying that it is “relaxing” and “a good thing to know.” For Paj, there are days at work when all she wants to do is go home and garden. “There’s a little bit of a therapeutic aspect to gardening because you can plug in earphones and work away, and there’s something about playing in the dirt that is comforting,” said Paj. “But when it comes to weeding and harvesting, picking beans and snow peas – man, what a killer on the back! We’ve got stools now.” Kiab expressed a similar transition. As a teenager, she felt like working on her parents’ farm was labor-intensive and prevented her from being able to spend time with friends. Once she began college, however, her interests and values shifted, and she began to enjoy farming. She stressed several times that growing and selling food is a lot of hard work, but now she is proud to be a farmer. It is important to note that one of the participants, Meej, said he does not enjoy gardening at all, and several interviewees expressed that their parents enjoy being productive, which does not necessarily mean that they enjoy gardening and selling food.

Health

KajSiab explained that many of the Hmong American elders view gardening as a way to stay active and healthy. Choj said:

Wintertime, people have headache, sore throat, body aching. They have to go to the doctor very often. When they do the garden, they feel good; they eat better; they don't see the doctor very often ... especially mental health. Yeah. They have something to do, they might feel better.

Several participants also shared that they appreciate the taste and quality of their own food. Ntaub explained, “[In] our culture, we don't eat very much food from the can, so it [is] always fresh; we have to cook fresh.” During the interview with Suab and her father Ci, Suab mentioned that her parents do not like to buy commercial chicken from the grocery store. One of Ci's friends in Arkansas raises commercial chickens, and Ci explained that it only takes four weeks for the chicks to mature into five-pound adults. He laughed and said, “It's like a balloon – boom!” Ci and his family raise their own chickens and keep them in their greenhouses during winter. The participants whose families grow food all use organic growing practices – the same they used in Laos, without any agricultural chemicals. “You eat a lot of chemical from grocery store,” said Choj, “but you have to eat something clean from garden.” Michael explained that when he has his own home, he would like to have a small garden with some vegetables. He said, “It's nice to cook . . . [with] fresh veggies that I know are good and haven't been sprayed with herbicides or stuff like that.”

Social Connections

Kin and the Hmong community

The social environment and interactions that occur among members of the Hmong community are significant motivators for the participants to grow food and sell at the farmers' markets. For example, Paj said:

There must be something with gardening – just there with the dirt. You can ask questions as you are weeding ... So for me, it was [a] great bonding experience for me and my mom and my sister, too. Because you have nothing to do but talk, and I didn't always listen to music because back then; it was a Walkman, and you couldn't get that stuff dirty. So my mom would tell us stories about when she was younger, and what she did with her mom and sisters – like this is how they planted and stuff like that ... So it was a good learning experience for me.

Similarly, KajSiab said that when she was young, gardening was “family bonding time.” She explained, “We're all together out on the farm, joking together, just trying to pass the time.” Paj said gardening was also the only space where she could ask her parents about the war. She was frustrated that she could not learn about their experience in textbooks.

I learned about the Vietnam War, but then I was like – well what about the Hmong people? Why aren't they in these books? ... So when you are in the garden, there's something about it ... I want to say it was a little therapeutic for her too because she was able to talk about it. I learned more about my mom by gardening with her because I would simply ask these questions. It's something that I couldn't ask her if we were anywhere except the garden. On a road trip, I don't think I could ask her about these things. It would be really weird and uncomfortable, but in the garden, it triggers something, a memory.

The community gardens and farmers' markets have also created a space to maintain important social ties with kin and the greater Hmong American community. Kiab's children enjoy being at market because all of their cousins are there:

Hmong people are real family-oriented. It's a whole family affair. Not just one person goes. You bring the whole family. So, it's nice because [my kids] actually get to meet up with the extended family, and I think that's just what they're used

to, too. We're half Hmong, and we hang out with Hmong kids on the weekends, on Saturdays.

Similarly, Michael and Yeej said that a lot of their Hmong friends and cousins are also at the farmers' markets, and they appreciate spending time with them.

Growing food for the family and the community helps first generation elders feel socially included. Sentiments of isolation and loneliness can be “exacerbated by geographic separation of family members, linguistic isolation, and lack of transportation” (Gerdner 2013, 198). For some elders, adapting to a different culture can diminish their ability to feel productive, skilled and valued in society. While their talents and viewpoints were appreciated or revered before, their contributions may not fit their new context. Providing food and clothing can help elders feel productive and valued in society. During the interview with Hli, she said, “Inside my brain or my heart, I still thinking that I’m ‘Hmong Lady’ so I have to know how to grow thing or how to sew, to make something.”

Kiab reflected on her parents' experience, explaining:

I think where they lived and grew up, they had a little shack and a plot of land, and your value was based on how many chickens you had and how much food you had in your house. It wasn't a dollar amount. It was what you had as livestock and produce so they still are very traditional in that way. That's how they show their value – [it's by] what they are growing.

By growing food and being reminded that their contributions matter, elders can maintain a sense of dignity and purpose, and feel included in the community. Agriculture has a significant effect on social interactions, as well, and how individuals in the Hmong community circumvent direct compliments. Kiab explained:

In our culture, you don't really compliment each other. You don't do it. So instead, a roundabout way to do it is to not talk about how much money you have but by how much you have grown on your farm – you've had a great garlic season – or you've had a great ... and that's really complimenting in a family, for

how great their farm is. Or, you might say, “You know, my garlic did so bad this year,” and then the other mothers would say, “Well, no. You did fine.” You know, building that confidence. So that's one way they compliment one another – through farming. You don't just say, “You look beautiful.” In our culture, we don't do that. It's very humbling.

During the summertime, Kiab’s mother often tells her, “Someone called me and just talked about how great my spinach crop was.” This is “a huge compliment” for her. It builds her mother’s confidence and reminds her parents that they have skills that are valued in society.

Customers

The participants also expressed pleasure in their interactions with regular customers and other shoppers at the farmers’ markets. For example, Kiab explained that one of her main motivations “is the people.” She enjoys seeing her regular customers each week and providing them with food that they really appreciate. Michael explained, “there are days when I am like, ‘I really don't want to be here,’ but then there are other days, the majority of the days, I like it – I love it.” He mentioned that he is an out-going person and enjoys interacting with customers. “When I see people coming to buy food, I'm just like, “Hey, what's up? How are you? Bubble tea?”

Hli and Foom’s parents travel great distances to sell produce in Great Falls and Butte. While this is partly due to vendor competition in Missoula, a primary motivation to sell in these locations is to maintain relationships with their customers and the farmers’ market staff. Similarly, Choj mentioned that he enjoys seeing people at the market that he used to work with before retiring from the health department. For Huab, selling at the Clark Fork Market is also a good way to practice her English with non-Hmong

community members. One of the participants said some customers can be somewhat difficult, but “most of them, hands-down, are really great.”

Community

Yeej said that his family is not too concerned about how much money they make. Instead, their primary motivation to sell food is “to provide the Missoula community with organic vegetables” that are “fresh” and “affordable.” Many of the participants and their families said they have donated leftover produce from the farmers’ markets to food banks and churches that support those in need. Hli mentioned that her family donates 1,000 pounds of produce every year to the Great Falls Food Bank. Mos and Keej explained that they sometimes give away produce to people for free. “Some people cannot afford it, and we feel bad, you know,” said Mos. “Anybody can be in that situation. I’ve been there, too, and we say, ‘take it – we want you to have it.’”

Conclusion to Motivations

In conclusion, there are many reasons why the Hmong American participants and their families choose to grow and sell food. Michael summarized some of these when he said:

For Hmong people, gardening is kind of like a staple. A, it provides food for us. B, it's also a source of income ... [and] like Yeej said, you know, his parents, farming's not their priority so farming is kind of like a pastime.

Yeej believes most of the Hmong Americans food producers in Missoula County continue gardening and farming as a hobby. He said it still remains an important source of income for some people, but the majority practice agriculture because it is a pastime that they enjoy. The responses from the other participants, however, show that the

incentives are more complex. Growing plants from Laos, maintaining self-reliant lifestyles, and strengthening kinship and community ties are also deeply rooted in cultural traditions and values.

Expectations to Continue Growing and Selling Food

When asked whether participants and their families would continue growing and selling food, responses varied. Three of the first generation Hmong Americans – Kub, Hli and Ntaub – expect to grow and sell food until health issues or other unforeseen challenges prevent them from continuing. Choj, Huab, Mos and Keej said they will continue but might scale back in the future. Kub and Ci have children in high school or college, and they may stop selling food once their children are independent. Liag sells prepared food at the farmers' market and said that she will most likely do this and continue growing produce for the household in the future. Hli's grown children and extended family assist her with growing, preparing and selling produce at markets while Ntaub and her husband primarily provide this same support for their children's growing and selling endeavors.

The first-generation participants felt like the younger generation, in general, may not continue growing and selling food in the future because they have greater access to education and job opportunities. Ntaub explained, "I told my children, you don't do like me. You need to do something else like education or something else. But not like me . . . It's too hard for them." She also felt like the younger generation does not like to eat vegetables or get dirty from gardening. Ntaub seemed to feel that it was important, however, for the women to know how to grow their own food to provide for the family.

The other first-generation participants were not too concerned whether their children and the younger generation pursued agriculture. During the interview, Ci discussed higher education and his children's achievements. His son had just graduated from the UM Pharmacy Program, which is highly competitive, and they were planning a large graduation party for him. When asked if the younger generation will continue growing and selling food, Choj said, "Some may do; some may not." He discussed how higher education leads to a better paying job, a nicer house and car, and more vacation time. With less education, however, "a couple – they get \$30,000 per year." Choj said an income of \$30,000 per year does not cover the costs associated with having a house and children. "You have to do the garden," Choj explained. "If you do garden, you get \$10,000, \$15,000; you get \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year [in total]." Choj's daughter Paj is very involved with growing and selling food while working a fulltime job as an accountant. She does not feel like her parents pressure her to continue this agricultural lifestyle. Paj explained:

[My mom] taught me enough so that if I was to start my own garden, I would have an idea how to do it ... [but] ... it was really hard when we were growing up, and if our hands never get rough, she's perfectly fine with that. She would have no problem if we decided to garden, but I think she would much rather have me find a nine-five job so I'm not working so hard to put food on the table for my family.

Only one of the nine first-generation Hmong American participants, Ci, attended school in Laos. However, all nine of the second generation participants have earned – or plan on earning – college degrees. Meej is currently a graduate student, and several of the participants' siblings have also earned masters' degrees. Kub, Mos and Keej were the only first-generation participants to attend high school in the US, and Kub was the only one who earned a college degree.

For the second-generation participants, expectations were much more varied. Suab, Ci's daughter, is still in high school and seemed unsure whether she would continue growing and selling food when she has her own home. She responded that she views farm work as a chore, however, she continued to say:

After a while you get used to it and it becomes part of routine. I don't know. It's a really nice lifestyle, too, because it teaches you how to appreciate these things and how to appreciate hard work and where the money comes from 'cause it's a really big source of money for us so you learn to appreciate it after a while.

Similarly, Kiab explained that when she was a teenager, she did not enjoy helping her parents on the farm and working at the farmers' markets. She felt like it prevented her from being able to spend time with friends and pursue her interests, but during college, she began to appreciate and enjoy farming once again. Kiab and her husband want to continue farming for as long as they can. If their lives become too busy with their other full-time jobs and family, Kiab said that they may take a break from selling, but they would still grow their own food. Kiab's four children help both on the farm and at market. She explained:

Our ten year old, I can see him growing up, helping out more. He's helping plant the potatoes and corn, and the stuff he can be more independent with. It's nice to see that. That he's learning, you know, able to do it on his own someday if he's interested. But at this point, he's just waiting to turn 18 and move away from the farm, which was my idea, too.

Kiab understands that her children may or may not want to continue farming when they are adults, but she hopes they will appreciate the experience later on and return to it like she did. She also noted that quite a few of the Hmong Americans that are part of her generation are no longer continuing to farm. They are "going off to college" and many are moving away from Missoula in order to find jobs. The family typically moves with

the oldest or youngest son, and as they move to other cities in search of well-paying jobs, the families follow. She said that by staying in Missoula and pursuing agriculture, she and a few others in her generation are the exception.

The other second-generation Hmong American participants all foresee gardening in their futures but to different degrees, and none of them expressed interest in continuing to sell food. Foom and Paj's families will continue to grow and sell food, and both will most likely help them when needed. When Foom has his own home and property, he wants to be able to grow some of his own food and stressed that he would especially want a large garden or small farm if he has children in order to teach them. If Paj has daughters, she also sees gardening as an important bonding experience. Yeej responded:

I feel like gardening is engrained in me even though we've only done it for 10 years . . . So I would love to have a garden of my own one day, a small one to have fresh vegetables for myself. But to the extent that my parents are doing or to the extent that some other Hmong families are doing - probably not. But then I will take what I've learned to maybe have one for myself because it's definitely convenient in the summertime . . . I can just run out into the garden and grab a few carrots or onions.

Teeb and Frank said they might have small gardens as well. Even Michael, who does not have experience growing his own food, expressed an interest in having a very small garden or raised bed to grow a few vegetables and herbs when he has his own home.

Meej said he would like a break from growing – and especially selling – food.

People are like, "Wow, you really like this," and I'm like, "I don't like this at all!" ... I definitely want to shop locally wherever I go 'cause I understand the hard work that goes [into it] ... I've experienced that. I want to experience it from the other side of the table.

Despite his dislike of gardening, Meej said he might have a ten-foot-square garden in the future to grow some of the produce he likes to eat. He appreciated having fresh produce growing up and rarely remembers going to the grocery store to buy fruit and vegetables.

Conclusion to Expectations

In conclusion, the participants' expectations for themselves and their families is very diverse, but all of them voiced some interest in continuing to grow food – whether it is with a four by six foot plot or a fully functioning farm – to have easy access to fresh, healthy produce. These responses also indicate that some of the younger generation Hmong Americans may not show interest in pursuing agriculture at the moment, however, they may decide to return to it later in life. According to some of the participants, many of the Hmong American youth are moving to cities with better job opportunities and larger Hmong American communities. Considering that about 40% of produce vendors at Missoula County's farmers' markets are Hmong American, this shift may affect local food production as the first generation begins to retire from selling food.

Cultural Transitions

New Year Celebration

In Laos

The New Year is one of the most important celebrations in Hmong culture. Traditionally, it followed the rice harvest, occurring between the end of November and the beginning of January. Kub recalled:

In Laos, we . . . celebrate at the end of the harvest. You try to gather with your family, your relatives, the people in your village . . . pretty much gather, talk about how's your crops this year, and then the younger teenage kids, they can go and gather themselves and do a ball tossing . . . but most of the elderly people

gather and plan ahead and they kind of talk about their past experience like this past year what did they do wrong, what did they do right, and then they plan ahead for the next year, for harvest season.

The celebration was deeply tied to agriculture, but it was also a time to refrain from spending money, rest and find a potential spouse. Ntaub recalled:

For three days, our parents not allow us to spend money . . . and rest for three days. And then young girl and young boy dress very nice in new clothes. In this country you wear new clothes year-round, but in our country we kind of poor so we prepare the new one to wear in the New Year's day. So, go to throw a ball to each other from young man and young woman to choosing a bride or a husband by that time.

Today, Kub explained that “it's just part of keeping the tradition growing.”

In Missoula

The celebration in the US typically consists of the pole ceremony with extended family, a household gathering and a larger community event. During the pole ceremony, family members with the same last name gather around a tree or a pole while a shaman calls back their spirits. Suab explained:

We have a string tied up to a tree, and then we just circle around it while the shaman is calling back our spirits. And like, opening the ceremony I guess. And then we go under the string three times one way, and then we switch. And that kicks it off and then we go to our household calling.

Families that follow the animist religion return to their homes to wash away the old spirits and bring in the new. The father or a shaman will perform a ritual, which includes sacrificing a chicken and replacing the paper spirit house. Teeb explained:

It's made out of paper and hung on the wall. It's like a totem, and it's where the spirit of the house resides. So any time you need to pray, you go to that part of the house, and you light incense. You call your ancestors to come and protect you if you are going for a long trip or something. So for the New Year, you will burn the old one and set up a new one. And at that point, that's the start of the

New Year for the immediate household. And then for three days, you can't spend money or do much. It's kind of like, three days to just rest for the New Year and after that, that's when we consider the New Year for the immediate family.

During the household gathering, each family member also eats a boiled egg. Suab explained that the number of eggs represents the number of people in the household.

Foom said, “The egg is supposed to be like the new you, or something like that, but you have to eat the egg – You cannot *not* eat the egg.” The family also celebrates the New Year by sharing a meal together, which typically consists of traditional Hmong food from Laos. Suab stated:

We just eat rice and boil chicken. It's a really common diet for us - just the organic chickens that we grow and then we kill them ourselves and cook them ourselves. And we just boil them and then salt and pepper them. And we just eat it with rice. And there's chicken organs, of course. The elders tend to eat that because the kids are too, like, freaked out about it. So we don't like to eat it because we are a little too scared or intimidated by the chicken organs. But they chop it down and mix it with pepper and season it. They eat that too.

Liag's family eats traditional Hmong food, but also egg rolls, curry and salads for the New Year celebration in the home.

The community New Year celebration includes all of the Hmong Americans from Missoula County and sometimes Spokane. It is less of a religious ceremony and more of a social gathering to celebrate Hmong culture. Earlier in the year, the Hmong Americans in Missoula County select an organizer and a date for the community event. Kub said that the date changes from year to year because they “pick a date that's best for everyone.” This form of decision-making also happened back in Laos at the village level. The organizer sends letters to each family, asking them to donate a certain amount of money depending on the number of family members in the household. The money is then used to

buy ingredients for the banquet. Every family is also assigned a certain task to help prepare food. Teeb explained:

A group of moms will do the rice; a set of moms will do the salad dish; another set will do the eggrolls ... so the day of the celebration, we'll go to somebody's house, and each group will make all the rice or all the boiled pork ... so they'll go to the individual houses and make more than we can eat. Then when it's time to eat, they'll bring it in truckloads and go set it up and everybody will dish their own and go sit down to eat.

In addition to a banquet, the Hmong youth perform traditional dances, sing and enact plays. Children, young men and women also play *pov pob*, the traditional ball tossing courtship game; although, in Missoula, it is played as a fun activity rather than a ritual to find a spouse. While the event typically lasts four to five hours in Missoula, the festivities continue for a week in Laos and larger American cities with vibrant Hmong populations.

Suab discussed how the younger people wear traditional clothing “to look pretty” and “attract others” because this is when “[they are] typically supposed to find [their] soul mate.” She said the clothes are mostly handmade by the mothers and decorated with embroidery. Her mother has made “countless” costumes for her and her siblings. Paj said traditional clothes indicate from which clan a Hmong person belongs. Because the Hmong American community in Missoula County is the Striped clan, they wear New Year costumes with green stripes on their sleeves. Paj pulled out her phone and pointed to a photo.

When my mom was growing up, she wore this on a daily basis – the pants, the two aprons and then the shirt. The shirts are striped ... they are really hard to make. These stripes ... have to be cut into strips and sewn on so the only people who wear stripe are Striped Hmong people. In the old days, everybody wore these headdresses. So it's foam that you actually stick on your head, but traditionally, it was actually black cloth that you wrapped around your head, and it was really heavy. I've tried it before, and it's like your neck is a bobble head. But if you were married, you had no embroidered cloth on the outside, but if you were unmarried, you would have embroidery on the outside of the headdress.

And these are money vests with embroidery and money hanging off them. Now it's fake, but it used to be real silver coins – Francs, actually, because of the French – and they were really heavy like full-on silver armor outfits.

She explained that the women in the photo were wearing outfits made from polyester, but when her mother lived in Laos, she traded with the Chinese for silk cloth and made all of her clothes by hand. Her wedding outfit alone required six months to make. Now, traditional Hmong clothes are only worn for weddings and the New Year community celebration.

In larger Hmong communities

Yeej has family in Fresno and attends the city's New Year Celebration every year. In 2015, Michael accompanied Yeej and stated, "It's crazy – it was my first year so it was a real eye opener." The weeklong celebration in Fresno receives about 10,000 people in attendance. Ci also commented on the scale of the celebration in Laos and US cities like Fresno, saying "thousands and thousands" come from across the country. Suab responded:

We have a smaller one since we are a smaller community. We just have a big celebration banquet, but bigger cities have like a big flea market set up and socializing area. Yeah, it's a lot more intense in bigger cities.

Michael and Yeej also mentioned that Fresno and the Twin Cities host Fashion Weeks, which combine western and Hmong styles. Many of the young designers have their own webpages or advertise on social media, and they sell apparel at the New Year celebrations.

An Evolving Identity

The second generation is transitioning to a Hmong identity that is not directly tied to agriculture. Four of the young Hmong American men discussed the appeal of living in larger cities with significant Asian populations. Foom lived in Denver for two years before returning to Missoula. He explained, “Growing up here, I’m used to seeing a lot of Americans and Caucasians, and going there, there’s Asians everywhere . . . Asian markets, Asian restaurants, or Asian stores and stuff like that so it was a pretty big change.” Similarly, Meej reflected:

Missoula is a really nice place to grow up and live, but there’s kind of – compared to the rest of the nation – a lack of diversity . . . [In bigger cities], people know what Hmong people are. It’s not like Missoula where it’s like, “Are you Chinese?” “No.” “Oh, what’s Hmong?” You have to go through the whole spiel.

In elementary school, Meej was the only Hmong student except for a cousin who “blended in a little easier” as half-Hmong and half-Caucasian. He said there was some aspect of feeling isolated.

I think Missoula is really inclusive compared to the rest of Montana, which is really nice. But there’s some aspects of racism, discrimination. For the most part, you have to expect that in Missoula or Montana ‘cause there’s the lack of diversity. You have to make that experience better for everybody else. You can’t be mad at that person for their ignorance because they’ve grown up in an area that’s all white.

The male participants mentioned that they attend Sunday culture classes to learn about Hmong culture and practice speaking and writing Hmong. Michael explained that it is easy to lose the Hmong language in western Montana. He stated:

You would think that living in a smaller town, you would be more in-tune with your culture, but it’s really not. I think because we have such a small community, we hang out with Americans everyday so we lose our language. It’s sad, but it’s the truth, and I’m a prime example of it. I can speak it, but I can’t

read it. I can speak, but it's very choppy. And I feel really uncomfortable talking to older generations of adults.

Meej explained that the culture classes in Missoula are important, but sometimes other responsibilities prevent people from attending.

It's difficult because everybody's gardening. So during the summer, usually people don't attend. But during the fall and spring, there's class – but then it's hard because there's school. Sundays are my days to catch up on reading if markets' are still going on Saturdays ... I do go, but then it's a balance because I know it's my culture. But I need to pass my classes. So I think that's the biggest challenge to the Sunday class. Everybody sees the importance of it, but ... it's only for like four weeks or eight weeks total within the year. Is it really worth it to spend so many hours going if you only get this much and basically you have to relearn it every year because you're not actively learning it?

The Sunday culture classes in Missoula were originally for young men, but Meej explained that the older second-generation Hmong Americans persuaded the elders to include young women as well. He views this change as an important way to ensure their culture survives. “I see it as a dual relationship because there are aspects of what the women do that is really important that men should learn and vice versa,” explained Meej. “So you might not be able to practice it because of the cultural constraints and cultural expectations of it, but you understand the process of it.”

Hmong cultural knowledge is passed almost entirely through oral communication. The language divide between first and second generations significantly affects whether or not Hmong traditions will be able to continue into the future. Meej said, “Our culture and history has been passed down through language and stories so it’s really hard for myself to perceive people who say they are Hmong but don’t speak it.” Meej, Teeb and Paj expressed concern about whether or not the younger Hmong American generation will be able to communicate with their grandparents. Paj, for example, said:

Little kids are growing up immersed in English and whose parents don't speak Hmong to them – they're losing out on it, and it's a little sad because there will be a big disconnect between their grandparents and them, especially if they can't speak English very well. It's hard to communicate. So at home, I'm trying to help my mom – my dad's pretty good – but trying to help my mom to make sure she can get these words right so when she's communicating with her grandkids, she can actually converse with them.

Paj and Teeb grew up in a household where their parents required them to speak Hmong at home. Because it is a tonal language, Hmong can be particularly difficult to learn without being immersed in it. Paj gave an example with the word for 'water,' 'dog' and 'far.' All three words have the same pronunciation, but the Hmong word for 'dog' is a lower pitch. The word for 'water' is a middle octave, and the word for 'far' is a high octave. When her cousin was babysitting her nephew, he asked for water in English. Her cousin asked him to say it in Hmong. When he responded in Hmong, he said he wanted a drink of dog. She made him try again until he was able to say the correct word. Paj said, "If you're off note just a little bit, it's a whole different word you could be saying."

Michael grew up speaking Hmong with his friends and family but sometimes he wishes he had learned more when he was younger. He only recently started attending the Sunday culture classes, explaining:

I guess, when I was growing up, how do I put this ... I didn't care that I was Hmong. Honestly I didn't care. I was like, whatever, I'm Hmong. I hate to say this, but I was kind of ashamed I was Hmong. 'Cause I was different, and I was like, why can't I just be like white? So I was really ashamed to be Hmong, to be different ... I was just like – whatever. I can talk to all my friends in Hmong and whatnot. It is what it is. I went to Minnesota, and like Yeej said, it was an eye-opener.

His perception of being Hmong American dramatically changed during the summer of 2015. Both Michael and Yeej attended the Hmong Fourth of July Festival in the Twin Cities, which includes tournaments for volleyball, football, basketball and fishing.

Michael explained that it brings in thousands of Hmong Americans from across the country, and when he arrived with his sister, he said, “There were Hmong people talking, and I was like, ‘Oh, my gosh, I love hearing Hmong people talk.’ I fell in love in the Twin Cities this summer. I really want to up my game and learn a lot – learn as much as I can about the Hmong culture and being Hmong.” When he returned to Missoula, Michael decided to take the culture classes.

Yeej said that some of the larger cities, such as the Twin Cities, have optional Hmong language curriculum in the public schools for kindergarteners and first graders. He explained that colleges in Montana could offer Hmong as a foreign language, “but who's really going to take it, or who is really going to be familiar with the Hmong culture enough to take it, versus in the Twin Cities where there are thousands of Hmong people.” In some of the cities with large Hmong American populations, the Hmong language and culture classes are built into the school curriculum. One of Michael’s friends from Minnesota told him they would learn the Hmong alphabet in kindergarten and also talk in Hmong before and after class. Michael recalled:

And I was thinking that's so cool! No wonder [her] Hmong's so good and everything. I think, if you speak English in the bigger cities, it's like, why are you not speaking Hmong? That's who you are. Why don't you speak it?

Michael, Yeej and Meej are attracted to living within a larger Hmong American community that celebrates its culture and traditions while moving into politics, new professions and leadership positions. Michael said, “I went to Minnesota and I realized the Hmong in the Midwest have their Hmong-gy-Hmong Point. By that I mean they have doctors, lawyers, politicians and everything.” Likewise, Meej said:

I have a lot of family in Fresno and some family in the Twin Cities, too. They have a bigger Hmong population so they're more organized politically so if they

want more education for their charter schools that are specifically Hmong, they have the resources to do so and the people to back them up, to help out. But in Missoula, it's really small so we'll just help out each other in the community that we do have.

Yeej discussed the Twin Cities' Center for Hmong Arts and Talents (CHATs), which focuses on theater and music, and Hmong American Partnerships (HAP). HAP is the largest Hmong non-profit organization in the US with a mission to empower the refugee and immigrant community. Meej believes agriculture is engrained in Hmong culture, but he does not want it to be the defining element of their identity.

Regardless of wherever you go, there are Hmong families that garden. It's not a surprise 'cause [historically] Hmong people have been more agricultural. So it's kind of rooted into it, which is really nice. But at the same time, I don't want Hmong people to be like, "We're only striving for agricultural success," which is good, but it's not kind of diversified where people are like, "If I do want to go into agriculture, that's nice," or "I could also go into education, business, whatever." So I think the culture itself is changing, but agriculture and gardening is still one of the roots that people will always know directly or they have family members [who garden]. I don't think I have met any Hmong person that doesn't have a family member that gardens.

While Michael, Yeej and Meej are ready to move to the Twin Cities or Fresno, Frank and Foom prefer Missoula with its mountains, easy access to the outdoors and "quiet life." Frank wants to find a job in Missoula after he graduates from UM. Foom enjoyed the experience of living in Denver for two years but decided to return, largely due to the fishing opportunities and a community with similar interests.

I love to fish. I love the outdoorsy stuff. When I was in Denver, it was really hard for me to get into it because they have a lot of lakes, but the fishing isn't as much fun because I'm used to river fishing so I wasn't fond of fishing from a pond or a lake. And the people I hung out with, they weren't really outdoorsy either ... they would go out, downtown, do all that stuff, but when we have a hangout, they have like six laptops and everybody would be on a laptop playing video games together. I was like – I'm not really digg'n this, you know.

Teeb, Paj and Kiab all have fulltime employment in Missoula and plan on staying long-term. Paj prefers the smaller community in Missoula County. She said:

Our community's really small and it's one big family. It's like my mom's family ... I know everyone here in Missoula so if I go down to Target and I see a family, it's like, "Oh, hi! You guys are here, too?" And in Minnesota and California, some of those bigger cities – if you don't know them, you don't say hi to them ... It's really different.

She recalled visiting her older sister in Minnesota not long after she moved there. Paj saw an older Hmong woman in a store and greeted her in Hmong. The woman stared at her as Paj's sister walked around the corner of the aisle and grabbed her arm. Paj explained to her sister that she was just being friendly, but her sister responded, "You're not in Missoula anymore, OK? You're in St. Paul, Minnesota. If you don't know these Hmong people, you don't talk to them." Paj reflected on the experience and said that visiting cities with that kind of attitude makes her uncomfortable.

My sister lived in this neighborhood, and they had Hmong families living on both sides of them and across the street. They lived in the house for probably six years, and they didn't know any of their neighbors. It's really weird. I know all the neighbors on my street ... So when I spend too much time in big cities with a lot of Hmong people, I'm ready to go back home to Missoula where people are nice. I can hike up the M and say hi to everybody up there, and they will say hi back to me.

Foom suspects that many of the Hmong Americans who left Missoula County, may return when they have families and want to settle down. While it is possible that Michael and Yeej may return after several years in the Twin Cities, they did not express Foom's interest in fishing, hunting and other outdoor activities Missoula County has to offer. Instead, it seems that they want to make up for lost time and embrace their "Hmongness."

Michael reflected:

So like, now I'm 22 years, and I'm like, man, I missed out on being Hmong. In our culture ... if you're the father of the household, you have so many responsibilities, and it kind of saddens me because like, I missed out on so much, you know, and now, I am like trying to learn as much as I can. But, like I

said, I struggle with speaking it so if you don't know the language, you can't really learn a lot of other things. We have [culture classes] on Sundays, we have a Hmong class where we go and learn the alphabet and learn traditional things. So we're slowly, here in Missoula, we're slowly trying to build a better Hmong community, but we're not to California or Minnesota's level of Hmong-ness yet. It took me a long time to realize that I'm proud to be Hmong, and it's awesome.

Michael's identity struggle with being Hmong American is not unique. Second generation immigrants and refugees can often feel torn between two identities and shame for not completely meeting the expectations for either one. Meej, however, feels like he has found a balance.

I feel like I'm pretty solidified because my definition of being American is, you know, you live in America. You do basically what America does, but at the same time, there's the other aspect of being Hmong so it's integrative. Identity is not saying I'm this or I'm this. I'm a combination of both, and that's what being Hmong American – I always say, "I'm American, but I'm also Hmong because of the history that America has had with Hmong. With the Secret War, we're intertwined.

In conclusion, culture and identity are intricate and complex concepts. While Hmong Americans share a story of diaspora and an agricultural heritage, individual experiences and perceptions are highly diversified. Hmong American identity will shift and evolve, both for the individual and for the greater community in Missoula County. While some may view this change as a loss of culture, others see it as a positive transition.

I was sitting across from Choj in the University Center (UC) when he pointed at the large Chinese fan palm in the planter beside our booth. He said the people living in the mountains of Laos would weave the palm leaves together to make temporary shelter when they were travelling. He continued to tell me about a 2005 conference he had attended in the UC and a conversation with a Native American student working on his Ph.D. The student wanted to focus on Biblical studies, but his advisors said he should

write his dissertation on his heritage instead. Because he had lost his culture, he had to go to the library instead of his parents or grandparents. Choj said the student gave him the following advice:

I was native here. And you [are] native here. You remember your culture. You remember your language. Just a couple things. You remember those. At least you have to remember a little bit of that. Two hundred years from now, your children [are] going to be president. [People] will ask, "What's your language? What's your culture? Pick up those two ... before we let you be President of United States."

Choj paused for a moment before saying, "It's good idea."

DISCUSSION

The Hmong have demonstrated what Wyborn and others would identify as a high adaptive capacity to respond to changes and reduce their vulnerability (2014). As subsistence farmers in Laos, the Hmong continually adapted to changes in their ecological environment to survive; but they also experienced acculturation, “the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact” (Gibson 2001, 19). As ethnic minorities in Laos, they interacted with government officials from the dominant Lao culture and Chinese traders. However, they managed to maintain their own cultural beliefs, practices and values, largely due to their geographic isolation. The Hmong were once again forced to adapt when they fled Laos for the Thai refugee camps. Evidence of some acculturation is visible, for example, through the Thai food participants, like Liag, prepare for their families.

During the initial resettlement years in Missoula County, Montana, Hmong refugees encountered drastic ecological, social and political changes. Through agricultural modifications, technology (e.g., irrigation pumps and greenhouses), and kinship and co-ethnic ties, they were able to continue growing much of the produce they had in Laos and to raise chickens. This enabled the Hmong refugees to maintain, to varying degrees, their dietary, medicinal and ceremonial traditions. These findings align with studies in the literature regarding the benefits refugee and immigrant populations can access through participation in local food systems (Lutheran Social Services 2011; Patil et al. 2010; Darcé 2010). During the early years of resettlement, language barriers and a lack of formal education prevented many of the Hmong from entering formal employment positions that offered financial security. But farmers’ markets provided an

alternative employment route through which the first generation utilized their agricultural knowledge.

Some of the older individuals interviewed still rely on the farmers' markets for income, but for many of the vendors who have fulltime jobs and established careers, the motivations to grow and sell food are more than economic. By gardening, the participants and their families have better access to fresh, organically grown produce. It provides physical and mental health benefits for elders and respite from school and work for some of the younger individuals. These physical and psychological aspects support the findings by Laverentz and Krotz (2012).

Hmong culture is strongly defined by kinship and ethnic ties (Xiong 2013). Gardens and farmers' markets serve as the environments that help strengthen social networks, which, according to Mitchell and Trickett, are the links between members of a certain population (1980). For many of the families, gardening creates an important space for parents to share stories and strengthen bonds with their children. Hmong American produce vendors also rely on their children and occasionally extended family members to assist with production, preparation, and sales. Beyond the family, the Hmong American community in Missoula County exhibits a strong horizontal network – the ties between peers – as a close-knit group with a high frequency of interactions (Emery and Flora 2006). The individuals and families share many of the same interests, exchange knowledge and seeds, and assemble every year for the New Year celebration and other events. Hmong language and the Sunday culture classes play a significant role in maintaining these ties as well.

The use of vertical networks was particularly important during the early years of resettlement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Vertical networks are the links between an individual and different social networks (Emery and Flora 2006). The ties are usually less frequent, and the relationships are weaker; but they can connect individuals to resources such as loans and training. The Laos Family Community organization and residents in Missoula provided land to grow produce, and the founders of the Missoula Farmers' Market reached out to the Hmong American community to find vendors. Market staff provided training and resources such as tables and tablecloths until the Hmong American vendors were well established in their operations.

Despite their role in local food production, very few Hmong American farmers have participated in the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition's (CFAC) Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program (B. Buckingham, personal communication, February 10, 2016). CFAC has numerous programs to assist beginning farmers and ranchers in accessing land, financial resources, educational networks and business training. From the participants' responses, it does not seem that they necessarily want or need agricultural support. However, developing this type of vertical network may have been more relevant during the initial resettlement years.

Hmong identity has strong roots in agriculture, but it is changing. Over the last four decades, Hmong identity in the United States has shifted from refugee to citizen to Hmong American, with a strong emphasis on education and political participation (Yang 2013). Now, many of the young, college-educated Hmong Americans from Missoula County are seeking vertical networks in cities with larger Hmong populations, specifically the Twin Cities, MN, and Fresno, CA. By formalizing social networks into

institutional networks (e.g., Hmong American Partnerships) and striving for cultural recognition in mainstream society, the second and third generations of Hmong Americans are redefining what several participants referred to as “Hmongness.”

Using Tse’s four-stage model, it is clear that all 19 of the participants have moved out of Stage 1, ethnic unawareness, because they have an identity distinct from the surrounding community (2001). Michael was in Stage 2, ethnic ambivalence and evasion, for many years; his awareness of his minority status resulted in a negative attitude toward his identity. But after a trip to the Twin Cities, Michael moved into Stage 3, ethnic emergence, which involves actively trying to understand one’s minority status and gaining a more positive view of one’s heritage. The interviews suggest that many of the participants skipped Stage 2 and have oscillated between Stages 3 and 4. Participants like Meej and Kaib are strongly situated in Stage 4, ethnic incorporation; they have incorporated their minority identity into their overall social identity. These findings support Berry’s concept of bioculturalism, an adaptive approach that incorporates the ideals, values and practices of both the receiving and heritage cultures (1997). Hmong American identity – like all identities – is highly individualized, complex and dynamic. However, this study provides a comparison between the first- and second-generation participants, and recognizes the role of agriculture in ongoing identity formation, cultural adaption and transformation. (Weller and Turkon 2015).

To conclude, this study confirms the findings of the broader literature that the production and consumption of food are both physical and symbolic acts (Wilk 1999) and can affect identity formation. Weller and Turkon assert that food can help “maintain group solidarity and personal identity” (2015, 58). This is evident in the significant role

of food in celebrating the Hmong New Year. The banquet preparations for the large community gathering require group decision-making and organizing. Families gather to prepare the food and share a meal as the Hmong American community in Missoula County. Food is also a vital component of many rituals. For example, during the household New Year celebration, the ritual includes each family member eating a boiled egg. These annual experiences help shape both cultural and personal identities, but the role of food in identity formation extends into the daily lives of the participants as well. Many of the participants explained how their families serve rice at every meal, even when they eat non-Asian food. Food choice becomes a physical manifestation of one's identity.

An important contribution of this study is the testimony provided by the Hmong American participants that expands Weller and Turkon's concept to include agriculture and farmers' markets (2015). The shared experience of growing and selling food and the frequent interactions that occur in the gardens and at the markets, help maintain group solidarity. They also shape cultural and personal identities. Meej stated, "Regardless of wherever you go, there are Hmong families that garden ... I don't think I have met any Hmong person that doesn't have a family member that gardens." For many of the participants in this study, growing food is considered a practice, but it is also part of the Hmong culture and origin story, a tether to a distant homeland, people and events. Even those who did not have significant agricultural experience mentioned the role of agriculture in their ethnic identity, and several connected this agricultural heritage to Hmong values.

Next spring, many of the Hmong American participants will plant the seeds of mustard greens in their gardens. They will tend to them and eventually harvest the greens for family dinners and to sell at the farmers' markets. But for participants like Kiag, the seeds also represent her parents' journey from the highlands of Laos to western Montana. When Kiag teaches her sons how to plant mustard greens, she is also planting in them the story of the Hmong people and their cultural values and beliefs. They will eventually decide whether they grow and sell food in the future. They will choose which aspects of the Hmong culture they retain and which they let go, but their experiences in the garden and at the markets will affect this.

CONCLUSION

During the resettlement period, Hmong individuals and families arrived in western Montana with very few possessions. But they brought their agricultural heritage with them and values that have long been embedded in Hmong culture – hard work, persistence and self-reliance. With a few seeds sewn into their hems and the support from a strong kin and ethnic network, the Hmong American community has proven resilient. They play an important role in the local food system, making up about 40% of the produce vendors at Missoula County farmers’ markets, and the Hmong American population has significantly benefited from this participation as well.

By growing the same produce from Laos and raising chickens, they have been able to maintain some of their dietary, medicinal and ceremonial traditions; save money; and reap physical and psychological health benefits. Farmers’ markets have served as an alternative employment route for Hmong American families and have increased their visibility in the non-Hmong community. Additionally, gardens and markets have created important social spaces in which family members, the Hmong American community, and the communities across western and central Montana can form strong social networks.

While most of the second-generation participants said they do not intend to sell at farmers’ markets after their parents retire, they seemed to appreciate and acknowledge how growing and/or selling food have helped shaped their personal identities, and to varying degrees, all but one of the participants stated they plan to grow food in the future. Agriculture is part of the Hmong origin story, and several participants attribute Hmong values to this heritage. For those participants who connect agriculture with Hmong culture, growing food is both a physical and symbolic act that shapes personal and

cultural identity. As the second and subsequent generations of Hmong Americans transition to non-agrarian lifestyles, agriculture will increasingly become symbolic – part of a longer story.

AFTERWORD

Halfway through my research, I was asked by a Euro-American man why a “white girl from the Midwest” was interested in the agricultural practices of Hmong Americans and cultural identity. This question unsettled me. I said the ‘lessons learned’ from my research could be applied to develop an agricultural support program for incoming refugees. I expressed concern over the literature gaps and outdated information. I listed my experiences related to refugee resettlement, food justice and cultural identity to indicate that I was qualified to tell this story. But I was left feeling like these were poorly made attempts to justify the research. Did I tell the right story? Was it my story to tell?

I grew up in a Euro-American, middle-class family on a 330-acre farm in southwest Iowa. I am not a refugee, nor an immigrant and neither were my parents. Even though I was aware of my German heritage, it was not until I turned 19 that I realized my grandmother’s maiden name ‘Wagner’ was originally pronounced ‘Vagner.’ After several generations of assimilation in the United States, the Wagner line had lost its language, its traditions and its German identity. Except for a love of sauerkraut and homemade strudel at Christmas, I felt disconnected to my heritage. I told my sister that I felt cultureless and wished we had been able to retain more of our traditions. “You do have culture, and we do have traditions,” she said. “They just might not be the same as the ones our ancestors celebrated.” I was unsatisfied with this response.

Seven years later, I sat across from Choj who expressed the importance of remembering language and culture. I called my mother later that night and asked her to send me scanned images of our heritage photo-book. When I was eight years old, my

sister, mother, aunts, grandmother and I gathered to create these books for each of the families. Each book included a family tree and scanned photographs of our ancestors. Their lives were reduced to a few sentences, fragments of history that had been passed down to my grandmother or preserved in diaries. After a weekend of cutting, gluing and writing, sharing recipes and garden updates, we had four complete books and a pile of nameless photographs. Since no one knew what to do with the photos, I asked if I could keep them and create a collage for my room. I found myself transfixed by their dark eyes and frozen expressions. How long did it take to lose the ‘V’ in Wagner? When did strudel become a special occasion?

These thoughts were spiraling through my mind when I arrived at a potluck with four of the recently resettled Congolese families and volunteers in Missoula. Without knowing Swahili or their tribal languages, I connected best with the three-year-old in a casual game of ball kicking. The families were excited to have homes and a future that did not end in a refugee camp. But my heart ached for them. The initial resettlement years will be very challenging, and as they assimilate, the first and subsequent generations will have to decide which traditions they maintain and which they let go.

After writing the thesis, I realized that I agreed with my sister’s response. I do have my own culture – one that has been shaped by the black soil of my mother’s garden and the warmth of her kitchen. Maybe gardening can become the substrate that retains family histories and traditions. Maybe farmers’ markets can become the energy that powers social connectivity and inclusivity. Maybe food can feed our souls, celebrating those who came before and welcoming who we are to become.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Before the Interview: *check recording equipment to make sure it is turned on and working.*

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this interview. As a graduate student at the University of Montana, I am researching how agricultural experiences and goals compare between younger and older generations of Hmong Americans in Missoula County.

A key part of this project will include learning more about your role in growing and selling produce, the challenges you encounter, and whether or not agriculture is important to your cultural identity.

Before we begin, I would like to say that your identity will remain confidential and will not be used in presentations or written reports.

If I have your permission, I would like to record the interview. This will serve as a reference when I am writing the research report and help ensure that I accurately record your views. I will erase the recording once the interview has been transcribed and analyzed. Is this OK?

If the participant says yes, turn on the recorder. If he or she says no, I will need to take notes.

Background I would first like to ask you some questions about your background in agriculture and farmers' markets.

1. When did you start growing food?

Probe, if necessary: How old were you?

Probe, if necessary: What did you do?

2. What does your family grow?

Probe, if necessary: Does your family grow anything other than vegetables?

Probe, if yes: What do you grow?

3. Do you have any farm animals?

Probe, if yes: Are they for your family or do you sell them at the farmers' market?

Selling Produce Thanks. I am also interested in hearing about your experience selling food.

4. When did you begin to help at farmers' markets?

Probe, if necessary: How old were you?

Probe, if necessary: What did you do?

5. What do you do on a typical farmers' market day?

Probe: Can you tell me more about that?

Probe, if needed: How many farmers' markets do you work at each week?

6. Are there ways your family sells food other than at farmers' markets?

Probe, if needed: Tell me more about that.

Challenges Great. Next I would like to ask you about challenges you encounter.

7. What do you find to be challenging to grow food?

Probe, if necessary: Anything else?

Probe, if necessary: Is the weather an issue?

Probe, if necessary: What about water?

8. What challenges do you face with selling food?

Probe, if necessary: Can you tell me more?

Probe, if necessary: Is competition an issue?

Motivations I just have a few more questions.

10. Why does your family grow and sell food?

Probe, if necessary: Are there any other reasons?

11. Why do you personally grow and sell food?

Probe, if necessary: Anything else?

12. Do you feel like agriculture is part of your cultural identity?

Probe, if necessary: Why?

Probe, if necessary: Can you tell me about the New Year Celebration?

Probe, if necessary: How does food play a role in the New Year Celebration?

13. Do you think your younger/older relatives feel like agriculture is a part of their cultural identity?

Probe, if necessary: Can you explain this for me?
Probe: Anything else?

14: Do you think you will continue to be involved in agriculture and farmers' markets in the future? Why or why not?

Probe, if necessary: Are there any other reasons?

Conclusion Thank you.

15. Is there anything we haven't talked about today that you would like to add?

16. May I follow up with you if I have any questions?

Turn off the recorder.

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