Hmong Adolescent Conceptions of Citizenship

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The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive, study is to help us better understand how a small group of Hmong immigrant adolescents conceptualize their political and civic citizenship in the United States. Three focus groups including a total of 18 Hmong middle/junior high school adolescents were carried out in order to garner data. Upon data analysis and interpretation, it was determined that study participants consider rights and responsibilities important to citizenship in a democracy and participate in various social, political, academic, and environmental activities. Study participants emphasize the community good over personal self-interests. As Hmong culture tends to be more collectivist in nature, this value orientation may be incompatible with the curriculum, instruction, and philosophy that students experience in public schools: Hmong youth may experience educational disadvantage. Adolescents in this study are developing their conceptions of citizenship within a racialized, hierarchical society and they explained their experiences with racialization and how they understand white privilege.

Key Words: Citizenship, Civic identity, Civics education, Hmong education, Immigrant education, Middle level education, Political identity

Introduction

The number of immigrant youth in the United States is increasing. In 2006, immigrants accounted for 12.1% of the U.S. population, the second highest percentage of the populace since 1920. The population of immigrant youth and children born in the United States to foreign-born parents has grown by over one million since 1994, while the number of U.S.-born youth, who are the children of U.S.-born parents, has increased by only half a million (Marcelo & Lopez, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006a; 2006b).

There are approximately 170,000 Hmong immigrants in the United States, with the largest concentrations in Fresno, California and Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota (Lee, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The Hmong hold the highest individual poverty rates among all Asians in the United States and are among the poorest of all demographic groups in the country (Kim & Yeh, 2002; U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The Hmong maintain the youngest median age of all Asian-Americans at 16 years of age. Most Hmong children speak Hmong at home with their family members, although younger generations are learning and speaking Hmong less often than their elders (Keown-Bomar, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Further, many Hmong immigrant students enter school pre-literate and without prior formal school experiences (Vang, 2005). Of those Hmong 25 years and older, 59.6% have not yet received a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). The demographic data show that with the youngest median age of all Asian-Americans, many Hmong will have the opportunity for full citizenship in the near future.

The demographic data are important because educational experiences and economic levels during childhood and adolescence have been shown to impact civic and political parti-
cipation in adulthood. June Chapin (2001), for example, found that taking more social studies classes in high school was related to increased voting behavior in adulthood. When high school students participate in extracurricular activities like student government, they are more often politically active in early adulthood (Glanville, 1999). Members of economically and educationally disadvantaged groups have been found to be less politically active (Verba, Schlozman, Bracy, & Nie, 1993). Low levels of education and socioeconomic status in childhood then, tend to be related to lower political participation in adulthood.

The Problem

Political socialization research illuminates how immigrant children, including the Hmong, experience civic life through their daily experiences with their families and in the schools, two major institutions in U.S. life. School activities, academic curriculum, teachers and instruction, and the family, all have the potential to deter civic and political engagement, or to help youth develop civic knowledge, prepare them for civic participation, and create environments that foster political development. In the near future, Hmong youth will vote and exercise additional rights and responsibilities as citizens. Although previous scholarship details the development of Hmong adolescent ethnic and cultural identities (Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2002), there is little scholarship around how Hmong youth construct their political identities; how individuals understand and express themselves politically, like identification with a major political party. Nor is there much scholarship in regard to the construction of civic identities, which include the psychological elements of membership in a political community and the meanings and connections people make to their political and civic environments as citizens.

There are compelling reasons to study youth political socialization processes and agents, especially regarding Hmong immigrant experiences. Because we live in a democracy, it is critical that all youth are educated in such a way as to develop the motivation, skills, and understanding needed to fully participate as adult citizens (Bennett, 1997; Conover & Searing, 2000; Foner, 2001; Niemi & Smith; 2001). The political voices of some immigrant groups in U.S. society, including the Hmong, however, are less often heard; improved citizenship preparation might help these new citizens become civically engaged at higher rates than those found at the present. The purpose of this study is to explore how Hmong adolescents conceptualize their political and civic citizenship in the United States. Specifically, the research questions that will guide this scholarship include:

1. How do Hmong adolescents describe their political and civic citizenship?
2. What experiences influence the development of Hmong youths’ civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes?
3. What role(s) do school, parents, and family play in Hmong adolescent political and civic citizenship development?

"To think clearly what kind of citizenship ought to exist and how best to achieve it, we need to know first what actually does exist...we need to know a great deal more than we do at present about how citizens themselves understand their conduct as citizens" (Conover and Searing, 2002, p. 110).
I hope to clarify the following: a) the significance of political and civic citizenship for Hmong adolescents, b) the social and cultural milieu within which Hmong youths develop their political and civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes, c) from where or whom they learn to participate politically and civically and gain a personal sense of citizenship, and d) what roles Hmong youth take as citizens in the present.

**Review of the Literature**

Although several theorists address the development of cultural and ethnic identities of Hmong youth, few scholars have investigated the construction of citizenship identity. Two areas of literature are particularly relevant to this study: a) theories around immigrant identity construction, and b) conceptions of citizenship from the fields of political science and political psychology.

**Constructions of Identity Among Hmong Adolescents**

Three studies address how Hmong adolescents construct their cultural and ethnic identities. Stacey Lee (2005) observed that Hmong youth create their personal, ethnic, and cultural identities under unequal class, gender, race, and power relations in school. Lee conducted an ethnographic study for a year and a half in a mid-western high school, observing and interviewing 65 Hmong American high school students and their school’s staff. In Lee’s study, Hmong youth understood race to be dictated by the hegemonic white majority who viewed the Hmong as culturally different, foreign, and therefore un-American. Lee argued that the racialization process was central to becoming American; Hmong youth re-created their cultural identity in response to the dominant white society. In school, some Hmong students learned that their citizenship and “Americaness” was valued less than that of their white peers; whiteness remained the cultural norm while those ethnicities other than Caucasian were considered foreign, unusual, and inadequate (Lee, 2002). Hmong-Americans knew that their culture was not completely understood or respected by others in the school, including teachers, administration, and student peers.

Like Lee, Michael Olneck (2003) and Min Zhou (1997) examined identity construction in terms of race and power. Olneck (2003) conducted a literature review on the education of immigrant children and youth, including the Hmong, and analyzed the messages immigrants receive from their schools. Olneck determined that schools offer unequal opportunities to Hmong and immigrant youth based on their class and race. For immigrants, the schools do not transform their identities, but rather act as places where immigrants must search out and stake a place as racialized minorities.

The literature around straight-line and segmented assimilation, and how those theories apply to the ways immigrants adapt to U.S. society was studied by Zhou (1997). Zhou concluded that as they assimilated, Hmong students came to understand the advantages white students earned in school, based on their privileged race and class. Hmong students, in turn, developed and negotiated their own identities to conform to, or contradict, the dominant race.

“Last time, a Caucasian guy came up to my dad and I and he said, ‘Asians go back from where they came from because this is the Americans’ land. You should go back to where you came from.’ My dad and I just walked away. We didn’t do anything.” (Xiong, FG3)
Three major points emerge from the literature on Hmong adolescent cultural and ethnic constructions of identity. First, the white race is dominant, hegemonic, and considered “normal.” Others, including Hmong youth, construct their cultural and ethnic identities in relation to white society. Second, in addition to creating their identities vis-à-vis the white race, Hmong youth also construct their identities under unequal class, gender, and power relations in school. Third, the racialization process is central to becoming an American and schools are places where Hmong youth must situate themselves as a racialized minority.

Conceptions of Citizenship

The literature around the construction of cultural and ethnic identity directly addresses Hmong youth. There is little research, however, addressing Hmong youths’ conceptions of citizenship in a democracy. There is, however, a body of political science and political psychology research literature that examines various citizenship conceptions for adolescents in general. This review examines three major conceptions of citizenship.

Conventional Political Activity Versus Social Movements

In a large \((n=90,000)\), multifaceted project, 13- to 15-year-old students in 28 European countries were surveyed as part of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schultz, 2001). The goal of the study was to “identify and examine in a comparative framework the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their role as citizens in democracies” (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p. 13). The scholars determined that 14-year-olds tended to describe citizenship in terms of conventional political activity or social movements. Conventional political activities included voting in elections, joining political parties, engaging in political discussions, and showing respect for government officials. Students generally found the social movement dimension of citizenship to be more meaningful and important than conventional political activity. In their conceptions of positive citizenship practice for adults, 14-year-olds were more likely to support participation in environmental groups and human rights activities, as opposed to more conventional political and civic activities.

Responsibility, Participation, and Justice

Another conception of citizenship focuses on the themes of personal responsibility, participation, and justice. Using observations, interviews, and pre/post surveys, Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne (2004) studied 10 democratic education programs in the United States over two years. They combined findings of their study with democratic theory to develop three understandings of positive citizenship: 1) personally responsible citizens act in a responsible way in their environment by, for example, obeying the law, 2) participatory citizens engage in civic activities at local, state and/or national levels, usually in group-oriented efforts, and 3) justice-oriented citizens analyze the relationships between social, economic, and political affairs and act on their findings.

Membership, Sense of Citizenship, and Practice

A third conception of citizenship was developed by Pamela Conover and Donald Searing (2002). These scholars base their study on two understandings of citizenship. The first view emanates from civic republican thought and focuses on active citizen participation and relationships: citizens are connected to each other by traditions, and pursue the public good together. The second conception of citizenship is grounded in liberal political philosophy and
suggests a legalistic relationship between citizens, their neighbors, and the state. Conover and Searing state that:

To think clearly what kind of citizenship ought to exist and how best to achieve it, we need to know first what actually does exist...we need to know a great deal more than we do at present about how citizens themselves understand their conduct as citizens (2002, p. 110).

In order to know more about the meaning of citizenship for adolescents, Conover and Searing completed classroom activities, discussions, and focus groups with junior and senior high school students.

Conover and Searing (2002) determined that there are various elements of citizenship including membership, sense of citizenship, and practice. Membership is defined by one’s “legal status” or “standing” in the political community (Conover & Searing, 2002, p. 92). From one’s legal position in society comes various levels and nuances of citizenship (e.g., local, regional, state, national, multi-national like the European Union, and global). Sense of citizenship refers to identity and understanding, the psychological elements of membership in a political community. Identity denotes the meanings and connections people make to their political environment while understanding includes the belief citizens create and hold about their relationship to the political environment, including other citizens. Conover and Searing’s (2002) final facet of citizenship is practice --- the actions in which citizens participate in their public endeavors.

The three conceptions of citizenship detailed here help to create a layered, nuanced, and expanding conceptualization of citizenship (see Figure 1). At the center is private citizenship representing the legal, contractual relationship between members of the community. The private citizen votes in elections, joins political parties, and obeys laws, but does so in order to protect his or her private interests. In the participatory citizenship domain, citizens engage in civic activity at local, state, and national levels. Political participation can include individual endeavors at this point, but trends toward the group and community or consideration of community in local political spheres. In the citizenship for social movement domain, citizens participate in environmental groups and human rights activities, and their connection to each other expands from the local, state, and national levels to the global arena. The outer, expansive circle is that of Citizenship for justice and change. At this point, citizens analyze relations between social, economic, and political affairs at the local, state, national, and global levels, and act on their findings to create justice-based change.

The greater body of political science and political psychology literature helps to characterize how people define their role and practice of citizenship. There is little political science/psychology research, however, that directly investigates how Hmong adolescents conceptualize citizenship. Although some critical theorists have explored the development of cultural and ethnic identities of Hmong youth, no studies were located that investigated how Hmong adolescents conceptualize citizenship. Both theories of immigrant identity construction and citizenship conceptions from the fields of political science and political psychology are used as foundations for this study in order to fill a gap in scholarship around how Hmong adolescents conceptualize their citizenship identities. Critical theory will be utilized to help uncover the power structures that influence the development of personal definitions of citizenship for adolescent Hmong, while political science and political psychology literature will act as frameworks for conceptions of citizenship.
Research Methods

To gather information about what political and civic citizenship means to Hmong adolescents, three focus groups were conducted. Two key informants with strong ties to the Hmong community helped me find study participants in and around a large mid-western metropolitan area. The informants contacted the Hmong youth and invited them to participate in a focus group. A total of 18 (five male and 13 female) 12- to 15-year old Hmong youth participated in one of the three 75-minute focus group (FG) sessions that were carried out at a community center (FG1), a public library (FG2), and a coffee shop (FG3) from 2007 to 2008. At the beginning of the focus group, each youth was asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire that also inquired about participation in various organizations (see Appendix A).

Figure 1

A Conceptualization of Citizenship.
The five youth in the community center focus group did not answer questions about their participation in community organizations. They did, however, share demographic information. All youth were either in middle or junior high school (grades 6 through 9). Youth in these grades were chosen for this study, because in many U.S. schools, students take civics and U.S. history at these grade levels and are just starting to develop civic understanding and attitudes (Jenness, 1990). Of the 18 participants, 15 were born in the United States while three were born in Thailand. Two participants who were born in the United States did not know where their parents were born. The remaining 16 youth noted that their parents were born in either Laos or Thailand. Thus, most of the youth in this study are either first or second generation immigrants. Pseudonyms for each participant are used throughout this paper to ensure confidentiality. I chose to conduct focus groups for several reasons. First, research shows that Hmong learners tend to be field-sensitive and prefer to work with others while focusing on social cues (Timm, Chiang, & Finn, 1998). Schools in the United States often encourage independence and self-expression, which is culturally at odds with certain Hmong traditions; many Hmong students have been found to excel while learning in cooperative groups, and focus group interviews allow students to think and talk together (Chiang, 2000; Xiong & Detzner, 2005). Conversely, individual interviews may exacerbate demands on independent, individual work and thought. Second, focus group methodology helps in developing themes and generating hypotheses that emerge from group insights and ideas; focus groups result in qualitative data that will help us better understand how Hmong adolescents construct their citizenship identities (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 288). Third, focus groups permit participants to develop a sense of democratic community. As the focus group moderator, my job is to listen, not to speak for the others; focus group methodology allows people to speak for themselves. At the same time, participants can listen to their peers’ conceptualizations of citizenship and learn how other citizens construct democratic meaning and thinking.

Specific questions were asked during each focus group that helped to address the overarching research questions. Here, each research question is followed by a representative focus group question. (See Appendix B for the full list of focus group questions.)

**Research Question 1:** How do Hmong adolescents describe their political and civic citizenship? What does it mean to be a citizen?

**Research Question 2:** What experiences influence the development of Hmong youths’ civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes? What is life like for you in a democracy?

**Research Question 3:** What role(s) do school, parents, and family play in Hmong adolescent political and civic citizenship development? From whom have you learned about citizenship?

“I don’t want to be racist or prejudiced or anything, but then like …. But, sometimes, when people go to the store and then if you are not their kind, then the owners of the store look at you like you are different and they don’t want you.” (Gail, FG3)
All participant descriptions of citizen opportunities, action, and behavior were considered elements of Research Question 1. If the Hmong youth referred to parts of the cultural, social, or political milieu that could influence their attitudes toward, or their conceptions of citizenship, their focus group responses were placed under Research Question 2. When the youths reported direct teaching and learning from and/or with another person or event, their responses were placed under Research Question 3.

Focus groups have certain limitations. First, the patterns and themes that emerge from the focus groups in this study are not generalizable to other populations. The data gathered in these focus groups cannot be used for statistical projections, because there are too few participants and sampling is not random. Focus group methodology does not focus on the individual; the researcher will not garner independent information, but rather themes, topics, and ideas will emerge from multiple participants. As a white female researcher, my role as moderator of the focus groups could influence the responses shared by the participants.

The Long-Table Approach was implemented in order to analyze findings from the three focus groups. This method allowed me to identify emerging themes and categorize results, while reviewing all of the focus group data. In order to execute the Long-Table Approach, I transcribed the focus group tapes, and then sorted, arranged, and categorized the transcription data by focus group question. Then, from the youths’ responses, I looked for topics and patterns. Several themes emerged including: the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, the meaning of citizenship, citizenship behaviors, racism, community activities, family, friends, and school. When all of the transcribed data were compared, contrasted, and grouped with other like comments, descriptive statements were written to summarize major themes and ideas reflecting each focus group question. A peer review was conducted to critically examine my developing interpretations. Three social studies specialists reviewed all of the emerging themes and summary statements and confirmed my analysis of the focus group data. Finally, the current data were compared and contrasted to the existing literature and situated within the citizenship framework previously presented.

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore how Hmong adolescents conceptualize their political and civic citizenship identities in a democracy. In the focus groups, Hmong youth described the significance of their own and others’ citizenship, explained ways and under what circumstances they have developed their civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and clarified the roles that school, parents, family, and friends play in their citizenship development.

Hmong Adolescents’ Descriptions of Citizenship

Hmong youth participating in this study perceived their legal standing as citizens to include certain rights and responsibilities. They clearly conveyed the concept, however, that although they held certain rights as citizens, they did not have the right to violate the rights of others. These youth focused less on protecting their own rights and well-being, and more on promoting participation in and contributions toward their communities. Further, participants in this study expected citizens to question their government’s actions.

Rights

When asked about their rights as citizens, focus group participants most often described their First Amendment rights of freedom of expression, free speech, freedom of the press,
freedom to protest and assemble, and freedom of religion. As examples, Shoua (FG2) said “We are able to speak our minds out, well maybe except in school. So, we like have the rights to our own free speech. And then, we have the right to our own religion.” Gail (FG3) explained how “[You can choose] the way you dress, the religion that you choose, and the television you can watch.” While identifying their personal and legal rights, the youth in this study interposed the discussion with comments about the rights of others. It was clear from the conversations that although the youth believed citizens legally have rights, they also felt these rights were limited by law such that one could not violate the rights of others. With regard to rights, depth and nuance were missing from the adolescents’ responses even after extensive questioning; study participants did not expand deeply on citizens’ rights and in some cases, did not identify particular rights at all. In the third focus group, for example, I asked the participants several times, and in various ways, about the rights of citizens; in hopes of learning about the participants’ understanding of rights:

**Annette:** Let’s talk about rights. When you hear people talk about the rights of citizens, what do you think they mean? [pause]

**Jodi:** As in freedom of speech?

**Annette:** What else do you hear people talk about when they say ‘I have the Right’ or ‘I have rights?’ [pause] What kind of rights do they mean or what are they talking about? [pause]

**Xiong:** Rights to do anything they want.

**Annette:** What do you think are the most important rights?

**Jodi:** The right to vote.

**Annette:** What are other important rights?

**Jodi:** Going to school.

**Annette:** Where do you think rights come from?

**Gail:** Congress.

**Jodi:** Somewhere from the government. Something like that.

**Annette:** Anything else you want to say about rights?

**Soua:** I think we get rights from, like citizens do, and the government gets it and they turn it into a right or laws.

Brief responses were the norm in all three focus groups. No participants addressed the right to bear arms, the right against unlawful search or seizure, the right to jury trial and legal counsel, or the right to due process procedures. In the third focus group, Xiong described his experiences while deer hunting, but he did not discuss the right to own a gun. Very seldom did these Hmong youth identify major sources of citizens’ rights including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, or the Bill of Rights. These middle school adolescents acknowledged the scope and limits of rights, but only superficially. The participants’ responses and ideas around rights are not unusual. According to Richard Niemi and Jane Junn (1998), even high school students are generally unsure of where their rights come from, and their knowledge about rights is quite general. Further, sometimes U. S. forms of individual rights conflict with collectivist Hmong cultural traits (Keown-Bomar, 2004). For example, Hmong culture stresses respect for, and responsibility to, the family and work-
When one is out in the community, away from the family circle, certain behaviors are viewed as responsible and important. Like the students in the IEA study, youth in the present study agreed that conventional civic behaviors such as voting in elections and knowing and obeying the law are considered essential to responsible civic action. Unlike the IEA students, participants in this study spoke very little about participating in political parties. Several study participants stated that voting offered citizens the opportunity to have a voice in government, a critical role in a democracy. For example, Jodi (FG3) stated that when you vote “you can have your opinion on who you want to be doing stuff for you.” Another female noted, “I am happy that girls can vote” (Shoua, FG2).

According to Westheimer and Kahne (2004), personally responsible citizens obey the law. For study participants, citizens who broke the law were considered problematic, the antithesis of the responsible and respectful citizen. Stealing, shoplifting, murder, and violent acts were most often cited as the greatest threats to the populace. These Hmong youth considered ignorance of the law a negative attribute of citizenship as well. Overall, the participants considered the community in relation to breaking the law: “When one breaks the law, he takes the rights, happiness, and peace from other people” (Nancy, FG3).

For Hmong youth in this study, respectful and good citizens possessed and practiced two significant attributes. First, these people respected all other citizens, regardless of religion and ethnicity. Related to tolerance, focus group participants stated that respectful people are “open to all cultures” (Tommy, FG2) and “respect all races and religions” (Soua, FG3). Second, respectful people take care of the world and environment including, throwing away trash, tending to one’s surroundings, and caring for animals (Martha and Tammy, FG2). Study participants felt that good citizens improve their communities and their countries, and work to make life better for
everyone. Various participants stated that good citizens serve the country (Vang, FG2), help others (Gregory, FG2), and participate in the community (Soua, FG3). Kiki (FG1) described serving in the armed forces, but only if it hastened her route to citizenship:

I heard some people they were soldiers and they’re not citizens, but they became a soldier so that they can become a citizen. It puts people on the fast track to becoming citizen. I'll be in the army or the navy or the air force or whatever else at the military, and then I can become a citizen faster.

Focus group participants considered civic responsibilities more often, and in more depth than the rights of citizens. These Hmong youths’ emphasis on responsibilities, rather than rights, contradicts mainstream society’s concern for individual rights, and a general apathy toward civic participation and responsibility. For example, Pamela Conover, Ivor Crewe, and Donald Searing (1991) examined people’s ideas of rights, responsibilities, and citizenship identity. In their study, they found that mainstream U.S. citizens focused on individual civil rights and the freedom to make choices for themselves, rather than the duties required of citizenship. Further, participants in the Conover et al., (1991) study stated that from U.S. citizenship comes the opportunity to control personal destiny and freedom of personal expression. United States citizens understand rights to legal sanctuary from interference with their individual choices; protection from the government, society, and other citizens. Although U.S. citizens believe that there are duties necessary to maintaining the public good, Conover et al. found that the duties of citizenship were often perceived as less important than rights, because duties resulted in obligations that restrict freedoms. For mainstream U.S. citizens, “rights outweigh duties in defining their sense of citizenship” (Conover et al., p. 821). Most mainstream U.S. youths focus on their rights as citizens rather than their responsibilities, while immigrant youth tend to possess a greater sense of the responsibilities of citizenship than do other non-immigrant youth (Conover & Searing, 2000; Gonzales, Riedel, Avery, & Sullivan; 2001).

Contributions to the Community

Hmong youths’ ideas of responsibility include community participation and practice, two significant conceptions of citizenship to Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Conover and Searing (2002). Hmong youth in this study are already active members of the U.S. political culture (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). The literature reveals how participatory citizens engage in civic activity at the local, state, and national levels. Civic action includes individual endeavors, but the participatory citizenship stage evolves into group and community activities, with consideration for the greater public. Judith Torney-Purta et al. (2001) remind us that youth in their study found the social movement activities of citizenship, such as participation in environmental or human rights groups, more meaningful than conventional political activity. Although no youth in the present study indicated that they participated in a human rights organization, 3 of 13 stated that they participated in an environmental group. Further, in the focus groups, Hmong youth stated that a primary responsibility of citizenship was to make the world a better place by caring for the environment by keeping one’s surroundings clean. May (FG1) stated, “You have to make the place you are living to be a better place.”

In addition to environmental efforts, focus group participants reported involvement in various artistic, athletic, cultural, educational, political, civic, and social activities. For example, 11 of 13 Hmong youth reported that they participate in voluntary activities to help their community; 6 of 13 joined a cultural organiza-
tion based on ethnicity; 5 of 13 are involved in student council or student government; 3 of 13 stated that they collected money for a social cause via a charity organization; 3 of 13 participated in the Girl or Boy Scouts and; 1 of 13 of the youth are affiliated with a political party or union. Hmong youth in this study are actively involved in their civic endeavors: 4 of 13 attend organizational meet-ings or activities four or more times a week, 3 of 13 attend 1 to 3 times per week, while another 4 of 13 attend a few times each month, however, 2 of 13 noted that they almost never attend organizational meetings or activities.

Youth in this study are contributing to, and participating in their communities, and many of these activities have school connections. In the classroom, these youth are learning about legal, textbook definitions of rights, responsibilities, and civic behavior; they are actively participating in civic life via their school and community organizations. Continued participation in school functions is important for immigrant youth: previous research determined that classroom and school activities are vital to the development of immigrant youths’ future civic participation. For example, Conover and Searing (2000) demonstrated how students, including immigrants, who were members of more than one activity or group in high school (e.g., a sports team, the theater club) were more apt to support participation in political discussions and possess greater personal levels of political awareness. Participating in school activities gives youth the opportunity to discuss many topics, and experience the exchange of differing viewpoints. Civic education and discussion in school help create future opportunities for political deliberation and participation; practicing political discussion in the schools may enable civic discussion in settings outside the school.

**Citizens Stand Up to the Government**

In addition to their work with others to improve their communities, study participants stated that they thought citizens should participate together in peaceful, non-violent protests against unjust laws. This belief reflects student reports from the IEA study; youth across the 28 nations thought it was generally good for a democracy when its citizens peacefully protested laws they considered to be unjust (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Because the act of protesting almost always occurs in groups, this acceptance of protest shows how Hmong participants support community action; people are connected and working together in order to improve social, political, and economic situations. When asked if citizens should protest peacefully against unjust laws, Lia (FG2) said, “If they are not doing any violence, as long as it is peaceful, then I think that they should be able to protest however they want.” Further, youth in this study did not believe that citizens should support their country if it was doing something wrong. Instead, the youth explained how citizens must act based on their personal opinions: “I don’t think [people] should support their country if [the leaders] are doing wrong. It’s like, the Iraq War” (Jodi, FG3). Although the Hmong youths’ responses are similar to those adolescents in the IEA study, these ideas break in certain ways from some Hmong cultural teachings (Keown-Bomar, 2004). Traditionally, when Hmong disagree with someone or something in the extended family unit, they go to male familial elders to bring an end to the dispute. The responses by Hmong youth in this study suggest that it may be acceptable for people to go outside the family unit to communicate with entities such as the government.
Experiences Influencing the Development of Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

Although the youth in this study are not yet in high school, they are starting to think deeply about and experience serious social and political issues, as they develop their conceptions of citizenship. Some Hmong youth have already experienced racism and prejudice, but they consider it important to allow full rights to all U.S. citizens, even if they do not agree with the other persons’ philosophies or politics. And, although Hmong youth experience racialization in their daily lives, they feel enthusiastic about U.S. citizenship for themselves and their family members.

Racism and Prejudice

One social issue, racism, emerged in all three focus groups. The youth did not clearly state how they would implement societal changes to address racism, but they openly described personal encounters and thoughts about the problem. Kiki (FG1) said, “Now there is still racism,” while Lia (FG2) stated, “there are some people who are still racist.”

When asked if some people in U.S. society enjoyed more rights than others, Hmong youth in this study agreed that white people in the United States hold more rights than other racial or ethnic groups, reflecting Zhou’s (1997) research around white Americans’ privilege and advantage. For example, Xiong (FG3) explained that “Caucasians think they have the most rights” and he continued by sharing a critical incident with focus group members:

Especially, like when we go hunting. Like I don’t get any rights. Yeah. And like when I, when we drive past some Caucasians they will be like yelling at us. When we are walking even though we are far away from their deer stand. They will walk straight up to us and tell us to get out of the place and go hunt in a different zone. But then me and my dad we don’t mind, we just walk away. Last time, a Caucasian guy came up to my dad and I and he said, ‘Asians go back from where they came from because this is the Americans’ land. You should go back to where you came from.’ My dad and I just walked away. We didn’t do anything.

Another critical incident around race was discussed by the Hmong youth in this study:

I don’t want to be racist or prejudiced or anything, but then like…But, sometimes, when people go to the store and then if you are not their kind, then the owners of the store look at you like you are different and they don’t want you. Or else, like if it is like a really ghetto Asian person and they stole something from the stores like a really ghetto Asian person compared to a Caucasian person, they might say that the Asian person stole it, because he is kind of ghetto and like something like that. So, they might think it is the Asian guy, because he is just ghetto. So, I don’t know, sometimes I think it depends on your race for the rights. (Gail, FG3)

Youth in this study are reflecting on their social, cultural, and economic experiences with race as they develop their personal conceptions of citizenship in the United States, and these encounters may be developmentally problematic. John Berry, Jean Phinney, David Sam, and Paul Vedder (2006) found a strong association between more perceived discrimination and poorer psychological and socio-cultural adaptation; perceived discrimination turned out to be strongly negatively related to various aspects of young immigrants’ well-being. Racism and discrimination then can undermine the psychological, educational, and social
development of Hmong youth, as they form their ideas about citizenship in a democracy. Hmong youths’ sense of identity and understanding, Conover and Searing’s (2002) psychological elements of membership in the U.S. political community, includes racism and prejudice. Further, like the youth in Lee’s (2005) study, Hmong adolescents in the present study and learn that racialization is part of the process of becoming and being a U.S. citizen, especially as they compare their standing in U.S. society to their white peers.

**Full Rights Granted to Others**

While study participants described racism as part of their citizenship experience, in general, they agreed that all U.S. citizens should enjoy full rights under the law, even if they disagreed with the philosophy of the ‘other.’ There are similarities here to the U.S. students in Carole Hahn’s (1998) study who were hesitant to grant certain rights to those who discriminated against others, but at the same time were opposed to limiting racist groups’ rights to free speech. When Hmong study participants, for example, were asked if members of the Nazi Party should be able to publicly demonstrate, run for elections, and conduct public speeches, many of the study youth agreed as long as there was no violence. Lia (FG2) said,

> I think that they could, they can as long as there is no violence involved. If someone disagrees with them, then [the Nazis] should not get mad about it. If they are going to tell their ideas and people disagree with it, they should not use violence to solve it.

Cheng (FG2) also included violence in his thoughts about rights for others when he said, “I think that they can do this as long as they don’t turn it into something else that turns into violence or war or anything.” Jodi (FG3), however, felt hesitant to give rights to a group with whom she disagreed: Like yes they should because they should speak their minds out like all citizens, and how people said they should like [have] freedom of speech. So they should, but then on the other hand they really should not because they are not a really good influence on the people.

Further, some study participants considered the past when deciding if Nazi Party members should have the same rights as others: I think that a reason why people would disagree with this is because of the past, what the Nazis had been doing, Hitler and all that Jew stuff. To members of the Nazi party, they are still citizens and they have rights just like everybody else has. (Cheng, FG2)

> I read a book about them in school and I thought they were very bad people. But then it is true they are people just like us, so I think that they should have rights. So, I think they should be able [to demonstrate]. (Martha, FG2)

**Longing for Citizenship in a Democratic Society**

Although study participants acknowledged experiencing racism in the United States, they shared their appreciation for living in a democracy, their positive civic attitudes, and their desire for themselves and their families to become U.S. citizens. In her Hmong family memoir, Kao Kalia Yang (2008) also describes how adults in her life expressed gratitude for life in the United States. Youth in the present study described how their parents often worked for many years to gain U.S. citizenship. Kiki (FG1) stated, “My parents have been waiting so long to take the test. I think it was 14 years that they want to become citizens. And, they want to be here because America is a multicul-
tural place and is more peaceful.” Further, when a family member does become a legal citizen of the United States, it is reason for happiness. Several times in the focus group interviews, various youth shared their joy about a family member passing the citizenship test. With a smile on her face, Martha (FG2) said, “It [was] exciting when my mom got her citizenship.” After becoming legal U.S. citizens, youth in the focus groups shared their happiness and pride in their own and their parents’ citizenship status.

When the youth talked about their parents or other family members passing the citizenship examination and being granted full legal citizenship, they spoke with passion and confidence. I saw many smiles on the youths’ faces, and their demeanor was almost giddy. In a sense, youth in the study seemed to take some credit for their parents’ citizenship achievements and success; the youths talked excitedly about how they helped their parents and grandparents prepare for the test by translating and quizzing on citizenship materials. The youth often described the preparation time spent with family members as a “fun” and “exciting” experience, and they also conveyed a sense of anticipation or drama around the citizenship examination. During the focus group discussions, I felt a collective sigh of relief when the youths described how their parents “went downtown to take the test” (Martha, FG2) and “actually passed” (Kiki, FG1).

**Longing for the Homeland**

While study participants and their relatives strive to become U.S. citizens, in certain families there remains a deep longing for their former homeland and lifestyle in Laos. Yang (2008) describes the dual feelings of joy Hmong families feel as they establish their citizenship in the United States, and yearning for the wisdom and traditions of their familial roots. In the present study, Kiki (FG1) explained what her mother shared with her about Laotian life and culture:

> My mom misses the food. She told me ‘we just used to pick fresh vegetables. They were better than here, the vegetables are better than here.’ I know for sure my mom would like to go back if she can and I do have an aunt over there. But my aunt can't talk. I know that my parents miss the bamboo house. I do know they liked living there. Then they say some days they want to go back and go visit. They want to go visit the place they are originally from.

Regardless of the financial burden, some families return to Laos, because they long to see their family members and homeland. Foua (FG1) stated that her entire immediate family went back to Laos to visit extended family:

> We went. I went to a house with my family, my two sisters, and my mom and dad. And, we went to visit the place where my dad was born. And we visited our cousins, and stepbrothers, and sisters.

When the study participants talked about life and citizenship in the United States, they spoke positively. For example, May (FG1) said, “I'm glad about being in this country right now.” Foua (FG1) explained how her parents told her that for them “life here [in the United States] is more complicated because we have to deal with money, and money is everything, but being here is a good thing.” Several focus group participants described how they appreciated living in the United States and that living in this country and being a U.S. citizen is a “good thing.” As the youth shared their feelings about living and citizenship in the United States, they described a type of homesickness as experienced by their parents. This
longing for one’s home country and culture was conveyed from Hmong parents to their children who participated in this study. These young adolescents hold very positive attitudes toward citizenship in the United States, and at the same time, they have learned from their parents that there were good things about living in Laos like food, traditions, family members, and their homes.

**The Role of School, Parents, and Family in Citizenship Development**

Hmong youth in this study described the roles (or non-roles) that school, parents, family, and friends play in their citizenship development and participation. Study participants reported learning about citizenship in their social studies and English classes, but not from their friends in or outside of school. The steps toward citizenship acquisition are a family event in the lives of these Hmong students.

**School and Citizenship**

Study participants learned about citizenship at school, and most of this learning revolved around acting responsibly and respectfully, voting in elections, obeying laws, and various forms of government. Most of these topics were covered in social studies class, specifically civics and U.S. history, but Soua (FG3) also stated that she learned about citizenship in English class when she said, “My English teacher she gave us the actual sheet with the [citizenship] test questions with the [citizenship] application.”

Hmong youth in this study explained that they learned in school about the existence of various forms of government including monarchies, dictatorships, and communist states. Similar to their discussion of rights, study participants shared little detailed description of their citizenship education experiences in the social studies classroom. They did explain that as they mature, citizenship education activities become more complex. When I pressed the youth, they did not expand greatly on their experiences at school when learning about citizenship. For example:

*Annette:* What have you learned about being a citizen at school?

*Yia (FG1):* Nothing.

*Annette:* What do you study in social studies?

*Yia (FG1):* I don't know we just sit and study about countries.

Because this is a study about Hmong youths’ conceptions of citizenship and not an examination of what is happening in their social studies classrooms, it is difficult to describe the types of social studies curriculum and instruction these adolescents experienced. Nevertheless, the participants in this study had difficulty expressing information about the ways in which their social studies classes have helped them conceptualize their citizenship. Niemi and Junn (1998) explain that in order for students to be politically knowledgeable, they must be exposed to political information and value that learning. Students who have taken more social studies courses have been exposed to more information about civics and government (Gimpel, Lay, & Schuknecht, 2003). Youth in the present study are in sixth through ninth grades, and therefore have had limited exposure to social studies information. Further, race and ethnicity may play a role in the meager information shared by Hmong youth during the focus groups. Research shows that many racial and ethnic minority children attend schools in lower-income districts that use inferior instructional materials, which could possibly impact the amount and type of exposure to social studies activities and learning (Conover & Searing, 2000; Niemi & Junn, 1998).
Friends and Citizenship

Hmong youth in this study are learning about citizenship, experiencing citizenship, and developing their conceptions of citizenship together. Whether in school or out, study participants claim that they do not learn about citizenship from their peers. When I asked the youth if they learned about citizenship from their friends, for example, Jodi (FG3) said, “Not really. ‘Cause you really don’t talk about it with your friends. Like oh yay!” When Jodi ended her response to my question by saying “Like oh yay!,” she started laughing while slightly shaking her head. The other four participants then started to laugh as well. I found Jodi’s reaction to the citizenship question to be significant, because some political socialization literature describes peer groups as important agents of political socialization for immigrant youth. Conversely, Jodi’s comment and another quotation from Yia (FG1), “[Friends] don’t tell me anything, they really don’t say anything,” convey the idea that peers and friends have very little relationship to citizenship development.

Although there is scant literature available compared to studies regarding the media, family, and school, available data demonstrate that peers may affect immigrants’ political socialization. For example, youth in Rivka Eisikovits’ (2005) study asserted that they seldom discussed civic ideas with their Russian counterparts, and that political communication with Israeli peers was limited because they wanted to deter conflicts with their friends and classmates. High school students increased discussion with peers when their teachers utilized the Kids Voting USA curriculum in their social studies classroom. Students, however, were hesitant to listen to their peers’ opposing viewpoints, or express personal opinions (McDevitt, Kiousis, Wu, Losch, & Ripley, 2003). It appears that students may feel cautious about experiencing, acknowledging, or creating controversy with their classmates, and this topic may be salient for future study.

The Family and Citizenship

The well-being of family members is critical to the Hmong youth in this study, and they agreed that the responsible citizen does what she or he can to support the success of the whole family. As May (FG1) said, good citizens “work hard to help others, yourself, your family, and your community.” Study participants and their families work together to become citizens, often by preparing for the citizenship test as a team. Several youth described how they or their siblings helped their parents and grandparents prepare for the citizenship test by quizzing them, reading test questions, and checking test answers. For adolescents in this study, each family member plays a significant role in citizenship development. These youths’ families are learning about the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship and the process of becoming citizens together; this is a group and community experience. This emphasis on the family is reflected in current literature: Julie Keown-Bomar (2004), Jo Ann Koltyk (1998), and Kao Kalia Yang (2008) all describe how central and significant family and kinship is within the Hmong community. Hmong individuals are encouraged to make choices and act in ways that promote immediate and extended family members.

Throughout this study Hmong youth emphasized their concern for other people, especially their families and their communities over their own self-interests, as evidenced by the familial teamwork, while preparing for the citizenship examination. The literature illustrates how value differences exist between immigrant groups’ cultures of origin and U.S. society. Mainstream U.S. culture is considered highly individualistic and emotionally independent from groups, organizations, and other collective bodies (Conover, Crewe, & Searing, 1991; Gonzales et al., 2001; Hui, 1988; Ol-
Characteristics associated with individualism include the separation of young people from their parents in early adulthood, high self-esteem, self-actualization, and the development of a personal identity (Williamson, Gonzales, Avery, Sullivan, Riedel, & Bos, 2003). Conversely, a collectivist value orientation focuses on the implications of one’s acts on others, sharing personal resources, emotional dependence on others, and group harmony and solidarity (Rhee, Uleman, Roman, & Lee, 1995). Asian adolescents in the United States hold stronger values regarding their obligations to assist, respect, and support their families than do adolescents from European backgrounds (Berry et al., 2006).

Several youth political socialization studies have concluded that minority and immigrant groups tend to be more collectivist in nature and that this value orientation may be incompatible with the curriculum and instruction that students experience at school (Conover, 1984; Conover & Searing, 2000). Conover and Searing (2000) found that social norms within the immigrant community emphasized respect for seniors and social civility, while at the same time discouraged political discussion and deliberation. Although there are few political socialization studies available addressing Hmong youth, certain research illustrates how collectivist and individualistic value orientations can impact Hmong students’ school experiences and family life (Thao, 2003; Xiong, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2004). Schools in the United States encourage independence and self-expression for adolescents, which is culturally at odds with certain Hmong traditions; many Hmong students have been found to excel while learning in cooperative groups under the tutelage of an authority figure (Chiang, 2000; Xiong & Detzner, 2005).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conover and Searing (2002) stated that we need to know much more about how people understand and conduct themselves as citizens. This study endeavors to help us learn more about how a small group of Hmong immigrant youth conceptualize their political and civic citizenship in the United States. Several major themes emerged through the course of this study. Not unlike their mainstream counterparts, the study participants define citizenship in legalistic terms, usually based on their First Amendment rights, and they consider the importance of rights and responsibilities when addressing citizenship behaviors. This study suggests that these youths’ understandings of their rights and responsibilities lack depth and nuance; these young citizens are still learning about citizenship from and with their family members, in school, and in their communities, and their conceptualizations of citizenship are becoming more complex as they mature. Youth in this study contribute to and participate in various social, political, academic, and environmental organizations and activities, and many of their activities are connected to their schools and local communities. For these youth, community includes family, school, neighborhood, activity groups, and organizations that ultimately have the potential to impact the global environment; community to these youth is not just their immediate locale. Study participants emphasized the community good over their personal self-interests. As Hmong culture tends to be more collectivist in nature, this value orientation may be incompatible with the curriculum, instruction, and philosophy that students experience in public schools. Hmong youth may be at a disadvantage in their educational endeavors. Adolescents in this study are developing their conceptions of citizenship within a racialized, hierarchical society and they explained their experiences with racialization and how they understand white privilege. Although these youth
have experienced racism, they feel tolerant of other religious beliefs, ethnicities, and political philosophies. Hmong youth strive for, and are excited about, U.S. citizenship for themselves and for their family members.

In the IEA study, Torney-Purta et al. (2001, p. 90) found that 14-year-olds were already members of the political culture they shared with adults. Hmong adolescents in this study are clearly young members of the U.S. democracy. Their ideas of citizenship reflect in certain ways the conceptions of citizenship offered by Conover and Searing (2002), Torney-Purta et al. (2001), and Westheimer and Kahne (2004), as depicted in Figure 1. For these youth citizenship involves: responsible and respectful behavior, including voting and obeying laws private citizenship; personal and communal civic engagement at the local level participatory citizenship that extends by its nature into state, national, and global spheres; civic actions, especially participation in organizations and community groups that can lead to social and environmental change citizenship for social movement; and, preliminary acknowledgement, experience, and analysis of social and racial relations citizenship for justice and change. The ideas about citizenship conveyed by the Hmong youth in this study, however, are distinct to their cultural, educational, political, and social experiences. For example, private citizens behave toward their neighbors in a legalistic and/or contractual manner in order to protect their personal interests, but study participants considered it their duty to work together and support the success of family and friends. Citizens for justice and change take action on social, economic, and political affairs to create justice-based change. Youth in the present study did not describe specific measures they are undertaking in order to combat racism or other challenging social issues.

Hmong and other immigrant youth cannot be unaccompanied as they continue their journey toward full citizenship in the United States; social studies educators can help ready Hmong youth for civic participation. First, educators need to be better equipped to prepare Hmong youth for an active civic life. Although there are few studies directly investigating teacher instructional styles on immigrant learners, Drinda Cherukuri’s (2007) study showed that Latino students received higher mean scores on civic knowledge tests in social studies classes that they rated as exemplary. In their research that included immigrant youth, James Gimpel et al. (2003) and Kim Fridkin, Patrick Kenney, and Jack Crittenden, (2006) found that good teachers positively impacted students, and when students enjoyed their civic education classes, they learned more and felt more politically efficacious. It is particularly valuable for immigrant youth who may feel disconnected from the political sphere to experience a trusting, positive relationship with a social studies teacher; these connections may result in greater political participation and civic knowledge within the student.

Second, thoughtful, complex social studies education is critical for all students, especially immigrants, because it has the potential to help students develop civic knowledge, prepare youth for civic participation (especially voting), and offer safe environments where students can deliberate and discuss political perspectives (Davies, 2002; Galston, 2001; Glanville, 1999; Torney-Purta, 2002). Classroom experiences are important because they may help young people develop important citizenship behaviors; the social studies classroom offers students the opportunity to participate in a community, and for many youth this is the first such type of experience. These preliminary classroom community encounters potentially facilitate future relationships between students and local, national, and global communities. In class, students may practice and participate in political discussion, which is important for various life experiences in a democracy (Chapin, 2001). Classroom discussions have the potential to deepen students’
political knowledge and develop participatory citizen identities (Conover & Searing, 2000; Hahn, 2001; Torney-Purta, 2001).

Third, Olneck (2003) reminds us that schools act as sites where immigrants come to understand their place in U.S. society as racialized minorities: it is critical that educators take action to deter racism in their schools and classrooms. School districts should provide support for immigrant and ethnocultural community organizations. District policies and programs should encourage the participation of immigrant youth and their families in all school programs together with the general population in order to encourage acceptance of cultural diversity. Educators should search for curricular and instructional approaches that allow immigrants to integrate their ethnic heritage with the mainstream culture, because research shows that biculturalism may buffer immigrants against the experience of discrimination (Berry et al., 2006).

Fourth, educators could invite immigrant students to share their citizenship experiences with other learners in their classrooms. Citizenship is a significant, tangible experience in the daily life of the Hmong youth in this study. Citizenship is salient to these youth as they strive with their families to become full citizens in the U.S. democracy. Conversely, non-immigrant U.S. students may experience and conceptualize citizenship much differently than immigrant youth because of their very dissimilar route to citizenship. Both immigrant and non-immigrant students may develop more complex notions of citizenship when teachers allow immigrants to share their citizenship experiences with mainstream peers.

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### About the Author

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### Citation for this Article

Appendix A -- Citizenship Focus Group Survey.

Citizenship Focus Group Survey

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Thank you for participating in the Citizenship Focus Group. Please answer the following questions before we start our focus group.

1. What is your first name? __________________________________________

2. Circle or write in your grade in school:  5 6 7 8 9 10  other ________

3. Circle your gender:  female  male

4. What grades do you receive in school most often? Circle one: mostly As  mostly Bs  mostly Cs  mostly Ds

5. In what country were you born? Circle one:
   - born in another country  _______________ (write in country name)
   - born in the United States

6. In what country was your mother born? Circle one:
   - born in another country  _______________ (write in country name)
   - born in the United States

7. In what country was your father born? Circle one:
   - born in another country  _______________ (write in country name)
   - born in the United States

8. Have you participated in the following organizations?
   - Check the appropriate box in each row.

   a) A student council/student government
   b) A youth organization affiliated with a political party or union
   c) A group which prepares a school newspaper
   d) An environmental organization
   e) A United Nations or UNESCO Club
   f) A student exchange or school partnership program
   g) A human rights organization
   h) A group conducting [voluntary] activities to help the community
   i) A charity collecting money for a social cause
   j) Boy or Girl Scouts

No  Yes
k) A cultural association [organization] based on ethnicity  □ □
l) A computer club  □ □
m) An art, music or drama organization  □ □
n) A sports organization or team  □ □
o) An organization sponsored by a religious group  □ □

9. Think about all the organizations listed above. How often do you attend meetings or activities for any or all of these organizations?

□ Almost every day (four or more days a week)
□ Several days (one to three days a week)
□ A few times each month
□ Never or almost never

Appendix B. Hmong Focus Group Questions

1. Please tell us your name and something you enjoy doing in your free time.

2. Draw a picture of two stick figures. One is a good citizen and the other is not a good citizen. Under each figure, write down what that person does that makes him or her a good or bad citizen. We will use these drawings during our focus group discussion.

3. What does it mean to be a citizen? *Probe:* How do good and not so good citizens behave/act? What do they do?

4. When people talk about rights and responsibilities of citizens, what do you think they mean?
   *Probe:* What are the rights of citizenship in a democracy?
   *Probe:* What are the obligations or duties of citizenship?
   *Probe:* Do you think that some people in our society have more rights than others?

5. Scenarios. I will share a set of citizenship scenarios with the group. I would like you to talk together regarding the situation. Do you agree or disagree with the statements? Why or why not?
   a. An adult who is a good citizen would participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust or wrong.
   b. People should support their country even if they think their country is doing something wrong.
   c. Members of the Nazi Party should be able to organize peaceful, non-violent demonstrations or rallies, run in elections for political office, and make public speeches about their ideas.

6. How have you learned about citizenship? From whom have you learned about citizenship? *Probe:* What do you learn at school about being a citizen?

7. If you wanted to describe to students from another country what it means to be Hmong in the United States, what would you say? *Probe:* What is similar and different about citizenship in your culture/home country and citizenship in the United States?

8. Suppose a cousin from another country came to the US and asked you about whether he or she should become a citizen. What would you say?

9. What is different about being a citizen in a democracy versus a citizen in a dictatorship or some other form of government? *Probe:* In your own words and understanding, what is a democracy? What are some examples of a democracy? What is life like for you in a democracy?

10. How is being a citizen different from being a visitor?