

From "Other Imagination" to "Self-Construction": A Study of the Evolution of the Image of the Hmong in the United States--The Second Series of Overseas Hmong Studies

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Abstract

This study employs the methods of literature and virtual ethnography to examine the representation of the Hmong in the United States from three perspectives: the media, texts, and cyberspace. It elucidates the internal logic and cultural connotations of the evolving representation of the Hmong in the United States by examining the American imagination of the Hmong and the Hmong's own construction of their image. It is argued that the Hmong culture as imagined by the American mainstream culture represents a perception of "backwardness" and "mysteriousness". Additionally, the Hmong elites have been observed to portray the stereotyped "refugee image" as "aggressive" and "positive". However, the Hmong elites have also been seen to attempt to shift this perception of the "refugee image" towards a more positive and aggressive representation. The Hmong elite attempts to portray the stereotypical "refugee image" as an "aggressive" and successful new immigrant in the United States. Conversely, the new generation of young Hmong people construct a "modern" and "ethnic" image of "struggling" through online self-media.

Keywords

The American Miao (Hmong); Image Evolvement; cultural landscape.

1. Introduction

The Hmong people, with their origins in China, have experienced a long history of significant migrations. Their journey began in the Yellow River basin, with subsequent movements to regions such as Hunan, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Guiwei. In the early nineteenth century, some Hmong groups entered Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, through Yunnan and Guangxi [1](Michaud, 2021). This migration pattern reflects the Hmong's adaptability and their tradition of cross-border mobility. A pivotal moment in Hmong history occurred following the conclusion of the Laotian "Secret War" in 1975. Approximately 100,000 Laotian Hmong individuals sought refuge in Thai refugee camps, with many subsequently resettling in Western countries such as the United States, France, and Canada [2](Vang, 2022). This marked the culmination of their transition from a traditional Chinese ethnic group to an international one, sparking significant scholarly interest and resulting in a series of research outputs. The University of Minnesota played a crucial role in establishing Western Hmong studies as an academic field. In 1981 and 1983, it held the inaugural and second Western Hmong Symposiums, respectively, publishing two seminal research anthologies: "The Hmong in the West" and "The Changing Face of Hmong." These works marked the advent of Western Hmong studies into a new era and a new phase in the study of the Hmong population in the West (Lee, 2021).[3]Currently, there are approximately 300,000 discrete Hmong groups in the United States, each with its own historical memory. The majority of research on these groups has been conducted by American scholars, concentrating on two key areas: An examination of

the lived experience of American Hmong and their cultural expression, including an analysis of survival strategies and cultural adaptation. For example, Chia Youyee Vang, a Hmong American, published the seminal text "Hmong America: Reconstructing Community in Diaspora" [4] (2010), providing a comprehensive account of the arduous journey of Hmong immigrants from Laos to the United States, as well as the social conflicts and contradictions encountered in the process of rebuilding the Hmong community in the U.S. More recently, Her and Buley-Meissner [5] (2022) have explored the challenges and opportunities faced by Hmong Americans in education, employment, and social integration. The issue of the "secret war" and Hmong migration. Jane Hamilton-Merritt published "Tragic Mountains" [6] (1993), delving into the role of the Hmong in the Laotian Civil War. Keith Quincy's works, "The Hmong, the United States, and the Secret War" [7] (2000) and "Harvesting Pa Chay's Wheat: The Hmong and America's Secret War in Laos" [8] (2011), are also significant contributions to this field. These studies not only document historical events but also explore the profound impact of war on Hmong social structures and cultural identity.

Additionally, there have been studies of the Hmong's migration and resettlement in various countries around the world. Sucheng Chan, a scholar of Chinese descent, published "Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America" [9] (1994). Kou Yang of California State University, Stanislaus, published "The Hmong of the United States after the Secret War: 1975-2000" [10] (2001), providing a detailed account of the social changes and cultural reconstruction of the Hmong in the United States over 25 years. Dr. Li Ya, an anthropologist from Australia, published "Harvesting the Wheat of Ba Chai: The Hmong of Laos and the Secret War in the United States" [11] (2004). Gary Yia Lee, who holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology, has published "Culture and Adaptation" and other works, including "Hmong Refugees in Australia" [12] (1986) and "Religious Expressions of Hmong Social Relations" [13] (1994), offering valuable insights into Hmong adaptation processes in different cultural contexts. T. Downing and other contributors edited the "Western Hmong Survey Report" [14] (1982/1985), while Glenn L. Hendricks and other editors compiled "The Hmong in Transition" [15] (1986). These two volumes present collections of essays on the cultural adaptation and language learning of Hmong refugees in the United States, laying the groundwork for subsequent research.

In recent years, research focus has shifted towards the diversity within Hmong communities and intergenerational differences. For instance, Ngo [16] (2022) explored how second-generation Hmong Americans navigate the balance between maintaining traditional culture and integrating into mainstream society. Meanwhile, Yang [17] (2023) examined issues of cultural preservation and identity formation in Hmong communities in the digital age.

This paper aims to examine the evolution of multiple images of the Hmong people in the United States, utilizing a combination of documentary sources and virtual ethnography (In relation to the term virtual ethnography, there are other related concepts such as (internet ethnography, Sade-Beck, 2004), (online ethnography, Markham, 2005), (cyber-ethnography, Ward, 1999) or (netnography, Kozinet, 2002) and so on.) (VE) (Hine, Christine 2000, Virtual Ethnography. London / Thousand Oaks / New Delhi: Sage) online surveys. This approach will facilitate an in-depth analysis of the ways in which white Americans have constructed images of the Hmong, and how the Hmong have constructed images of themselves. By employing this multifaceted research method, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Hmong's changing position in American society and their cultural adaptation processes, while also providing new perspectives on identity construction among ethnic minorities in the context of transnational migration.

2. Images of the Hmong in Film and Media

As the Hmong gradually integrate into American society, Americans are beginning to conceptualise the cultural image of a traditional ethnic minority within the context of Western discourse. First and foremost, the Hmong are perceived by Americans as a stereotypical image of a backward and suffering refugee population. Stereotypes represent a cognitive shortcut that the human brain employs to simplify the perception of the world. They are a set of labels that the brain applies to the complex world in order to facilitate categorisation and organisation. Secondly, the inherent cultural self-confidence and sense of superiority that characterise the American psyche have led to the labelling of ethnic minorities, including the Hmong, as backward, mysterious and heterogeneous cultures. These mechanical, stereotypical labels have gradually appeared in some literary and cinematic works.

In 2008, the inaugural film featuring the Hmong family and helmed by Clint Eastwood was released. Eastwood can be considered a representation of the Oldsmobile brand. Firstly, the film narrates the tale of a Hmong family beset by the machinations of the underworld, ultimately achieving redemption with the assistance of an elderly white man. Secondly, it portrays the insular and enigmatic nature of the Hmong community, encompassing the archaic and enigmatic religious rituals, the incomprehensible Hmong language, and other aspects. Thirdly, it illustrates the evolution of attitudes within the veteran Hmong family, showcasing traits that are scarce in modern American society, such as the warmth of the extended family and the harmony within family relationships. Ultimately, the film conveys the distinctive qualities of the Hmong family that are uncommon in contemporary American society, including the warmth of the extended family and the harmony among family members. In *Grey's Anatomy* and *Dr. House*, the Hmong are depicted as a mysterious ethnic minority, appearing only occasionally to satisfy the curiosity of some viewers without significantly impacting the main plot. To illustrate, in Season 2, Episode 5 of *Grey's Anatomy*, a Hmong girl afflicted with cancer is compelled to undergo an urgent surgical procedure. Despite the attending physician's reiteration of the necessity for immediate intervention, the patient's father persists in seeking the counsel of a Hmong shaman for a potential alternative treatment plan. The Hmong girl states to Grey, "I am not at a disadvantage in terms of my musical preferences or social activities at school compared to other students, but it is a family tradition." In Season 8, Episode 18 of the television series *Dr. House*, a Hmong child is treated for a headache. The doctor prescribes ibuprofen, while the child's grandfather insists on treating it according to traditional witchcraft practices. The episode does not elucidate whether the child's ailment was ultimately cured by witchcraft or ibuprofen. However, it is probable that an American educated in modern science would consider the Hmong to be the antithesis of modern civilisation. This is because they represent a backward, barbaric, and mysterious heterogeneous culture.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the portrayal of the Hmong people in American film and television, it is essential to consider the image from two distinct perspectives. Firstly, as a commercial film or television production, it is inevitable that the facts will be artfully processed and fictionalised in order to attract a larger audience and thereby increase box office revenue. This is also the reason why the second generation of Miao people have become deeply integrated into American society, occupying positions such as lawyers, professors and other high-level intellectuals. However, despite this integration, they have not appeared in film and television works, appearing instead in accordance with the image of a mysterious, backward, uncivilised and heterogeneous culture that is prevalent in the imagination of most Americans. It should be noted that the image is not uniformly negative. Indeed, the director of *Oldsmobile* actually reveals praise for the valuable qualities of the Hmong family. Secondly, film and television facilitate the recognition of Hmong culture by the general public. Notwithstanding the influence of preconceptions and the limitations of

conventional wisdom, it is evident that the reach and impact of modern social media can facilitate greater recognition of Hmong culture among the general public in the United States. Despite the fact that the Hmong are distributed across 25 states and 53 cities in the United States, they are few in number and dispersed in various independent communities. Consequently, they have limited contact with most Americans. In the absence of cinematic and televisual portrayals of the Hmong, many Americans would have been deprived of the opportunity to recognise the Hmong in their lives. The release of mainstream films such as "Classic Cars" in major theatres across the United States provided a rapid and relatively comprehensive introduction to the Hmong family for a broad audience.

It was soon apparent to the Hmong that the image of their community presented in the American mainstream media was not only misleading to the general American public but was also having a detrimental effect on the cultural confidence of the younger generation of Hmong people. In response, the Hmong have been working assiduously to establish their own media platforms and to produce film and television content. Since relocating to the United States, the Hmong have initiated the production of their own musical and video content for the purpose of intra-ethnic dissemination. This has led to their subsequent appearance in various forms of media, including videotapes, DVDs, documentaries, and feature films. From 1978 to 1983, the Hmong began to learn and attempt to apply Western popular music theory to create their own songs, writing English lyrics and developing their own musical idols. They also collaborated with experienced music producers in the United States to release a number of high-quality singers and albums. This approach proved fruitful, with early singers such as Es Lis, Lis Pos, Tub Lis Vam Khwb, Toj Lis and Mas Lis Vwj, among others, also performing concerts in locations including the United States and France. With the acquisition of expertise in photography, Hmong media professionals initiated the production of documentaries that elucidate historical events and launched a series of related works. Notable early works include *Disappearing World* (1972), *The Best Place to Live* (1981), and *Becoming American* (1982).

Following the events of 1997, the Hmong ABC bookstore in Minnesota produced a series of documentaries on the Hmong war in Laos and their subsequent migration to the United States. The Fact-Finding Commission in Oroville, California, produced two documentaries between 2002 and 2004 that chronicled the challenging experiences of the Hmong diaspora, including their struggles to survive and navigate identity crises in disparate contexts. The film attracted considerable attention from the international community and the media, with related issues being reported by a number of authoritative organisations, including the BBC, Time Magazine and ABC. In the 1990s, Hmong filmmakers in the United States began to produce films on a range of subjects, with the majority focusing on the Laotian Civil War and its complex history of migration. In subsequent years, the scope of Hmong filmmaking expanded to encompass a diverse array of themes, including love stories, Hmong communities in the United States, and other subjects. [18] The Hmong characters in these works display resilience and determination in the face of adversity, striving to establish themselves in a foreign land and providing inspiration for the American Hmong community.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the American media and film production companies, which hold considerable influence over discourse, are deliberately shaping and even distorting the image of the Hmong people in order to pursue commercial interests and cater to the audience's imagination and curiosity about heterogeneous cultures. In order to challenge this hegemony and challenge the general public's cognitive bias towards the Miao, some Miao people have begun to utilise new media in the Internet era, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc., to disseminate the traditional culture and values of their own ethnicity, and to present the public with an accurate and objective image of the Miao. A search for the term "Hmong in America" on YouTube returns over 3,000 results, including videos pertaining to Hmong festivals, media reports, daily life, religious ceremonies, and other topics.

Subsequently, a cohort of Hmong media professionals commenced the production of film and television scripts representing their own ethnicity. Katie Ka Vang, Maddie Wang, and Carrie Yang have all previously worked as screenwriters. The scripts written by Abel and Burlee Vang were awarded the Nicholls Fellowship out of LA, which is a scholarship for Hmong people in the USA. Additionally, Abel and Burlee Vang were awarded the Nicholls Fellowship, which is bestowed upon a mere five individuals annually.

3. Images of the Hmong in Texts

In contrast to the Hmong depicted in mainstream American cinema and television, the Hmong have in fact integrated into American society, increased their level of education and begun to make a name for themselves in a number of fields, including higher education, publishing, the legal profession and business. In particular, the second generation of Hmong individuals, who were educated in the United States from an early age, have typically pursued undergraduate studies as they have matured into adulthood. Concurrently, a number of colleges and universities in the United States have established Hmong studies programmes. For example, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee established the Hmong Diaspora Studies Program, and Concordia University St. Paul established the Center for Hmong Studies. Furthermore, a number of interdisciplinary academic conferences on Hmong Studies are held on a regular basis, including the Biennial International Conference on Hmong Studies at Concordia and the symposium organised by the Consortium for Hmong Studies. Hmong Studies and the Consortium for Hmong Studies. The Hmong Studies Journal, an online e-journal, has been publishing works on Hmong/Hmong American studies for two decades. These developments indicate that Hmong and Hmong American studies are becoming more systematic, and that a more nuanced and multifaceted representation of the Hmong is emerging from these texts.

Hmong Americans entered the United States in discrete groups as refugees, facilitated by the intervention of the United Nations, and were dispersed to 25 states and 53 different cities. In the initial perception of the majority of Americans, Hmong Americans are synonymous with the notion of refugees who were forcibly displaced from their homelands and resettled in the United States with the assistance of the U.S. government. The publication of books such as *A Great Place to Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of a Military CIA* and the declassification of military archives have facilitated the emergence of hitherto obscure details pertaining to the so-called 'Secret War'. The public began to ascertain that the CIA was not merely a loosely constituted intelligence agency, but that it also played a significant role in American foreign policy as a military organisation. Through a process of extensive interviewing, the author identifies four key figures in the context of the "Secret War". Notable figures included CIA officer Bill Lair, who possessed expertise in the languages and cultures of Southeast Asia and was instrumental in devising strategies and tactics; Anthony Poshepny, who oversaw the training of Hmong military officers; and General Wang Bao, a Laotian "Hmong lion" who was responsible for the training of Hmong military officers. " General Wang Bao, the paramount leader of the Hmong people in Laos, and U.S. Ambassador Bill Sullivan. [19] In September 2016, Barack Obama visited Vientiane, the capital of Laos, where he made a reference in his speech to the fact that the United States had dropped more than two million tons of bombs on the Xieng Khouang Plain between 1963 and 1974. This figure is greater than the total number of bombs dropped by the United States on Germany and Japan combined during the Second World War. Furthermore, it was asserted that the United States would provide Laos with an additional \$90 million in financial assistance annually for the following three years, with the objective of assisting Laos in the clearance of unexploded ordnance following the conclusion of hostilities. Following the release of a substantial body of evidence to the public, a segment of the American population came to recognize the role of the CIA in the hardship experienced by the Hmong in

the United States. While there was a discernible shift towards greater sympathy and compassion for their refugee status, the image of the Hmong refugees in the United States also underwent a transformation.

In 1998, American author Anne Fadiman published *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, an American Doctor, and the Clash of Cultures*. Anne Fadiman, A. (1998). *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, an American Doctor, and the Clash of Cultures*. [20] The case study of a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures. The concept of "Two Cultures" is a key theme in this work. From the vantage point of the Other, the author employs the disparate treatment modalities of the two parties when confronted with illness as a means of delineating the Hmong as a representation of traditional and heterogeneous cultures that are in discord with modern American civilization. In contrast, Hmong writers are able to adopt a more nuanced perspective when examining issues pertaining to identity and survival strategies. This enables them to shed light on the complex and evolving experiences of the Hmong community in the United States, as they navigate the process of adaptation and integration within the broader social and cultural landscape. As representatives of discrete ethnic groups, an increasing number of Hmong youth in the United States have adopted the stylistic conventions of diasporic literature to articulate the emotions and experiences of displaced ethnic groups and to present a compelling image of the Hmong people in their ongoing quest for ethnic identity and belonging. In examining the discrete literature produced by these writers, it becomes evident that their work evinces a nuanced exploration of emotional nuances, encompassing the spectrum of experiences associated with identity loss and contradiction, as well as the resilience and evolution of identity, which is a dynamic process that accompanies the continuous growth and transformation of the Hmong people. The American Hmong writer Bee Cha provides an illustrative example of the stark contrast between Hmong traditional culture and white mainstream culture. Through the portrayal of Hmong and white women in prose, he effectively conveys the skepticism and even denial of their own traditional culture.

The American Hmong poet Li Feng. In contrast to Zhang Feng's disorientation, Pacyinz Lyfoung's works demonstrate his resilience and self-assurance in the context of the Hmong identity. This is evident in his "Walking Manifesto," in which he states: "If someone were to inquire as to the nature of my activities throughout my lifetime, I would respond..." What is the purpose of my existence? "The man who gave me life destined me to answer. I have been engaged in the act of walking throughout my life, as this was a practice observed among the Hmong people." [21]

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the creativity of Hmong writers, exemplified by Kao Kalia Yang's *The Latecomer*. Notable works include *A Hmong Family Memoir* [22] and (Mai Neng Moua's) *Bamboo Among the Oaks* [23] *Where Is the Road* [24] The successive publication of these works demonstrates the Hmong people's cultural self-confidence and voice. Two notable examples are Mai Neng Moua's *Bamboo Among the Oaks* and Mai Neng Moua's *Where Is the Road?* In *Dreaming Home*, the arduous journey of a Hmong family from their homeland in Laos to a refugee camp in Thailand and finally to the United States is chronicled. The author employs a combination of familial reminiscences and national history in order to delineate the Hmong experience of dispersal. It is notable that this is the inaugural full-length novel to be authored and published in English by a female Hmong writer. Additionally, *Bamboo Forests in the Oak Grove* represents the inaugural anthology to be edited and published by the Hmong, comprising poems, prose, and dramas authored by Hmong writers. Furthermore, *Where the Road Lies* is a compendium of the works of seventeen Hmong writers. The presented works offer an objective and realistic portrayal of the Hmong people for Hmong youth and American society from a first-person perspective. This is done with the intention of fostering understanding and recognition among the general public. The

establishment of the literary journal Paj Ntaub Voice was met with considerable enthusiasm by Hmong writers, leading to the formation of a collective of emerging Hmong writers. The journal was established in 1994 by Mai Neng Moua, a Hmong American writer. It began publishing in print in 2003 and has provided a platform for numerous Hmong American writers to showcase their talents. It is worthy of note that Kou Yang, a retired professor from the Institute of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, has recently published his latest research, entitled *The Making of Hmong America. Forty Years after the Secret War [25]: A Retrospective*. This significant contribution to the field of Hmong studies restores the historical context of Hmong dispersal in the United States, both before and after the Secret War, as well as the resettlement of the Hmong in Western countries. Secondly, the text describes the various efforts made by the Hmong to integrate into Western societies, such as the United States. It also lists the achievements of the Hmong in a number of fields, including education, high technology, academia, politics and the military, over the course of the forty years following the war. In the view of Prof. Yang, the Hmong in the United States represent another success story of immigration in the modern era. They have succeeded in establishing a large population of over 300,000 in all 50 states of the U.S. and have undergone a significant transformation from a traditional mountain people to a modern ethnic group. The Hmong elite have endeavoured to construct a comprehensive and multifaceted representation of the successful new immigrants in the United States, yet the impact remains relatively constrained.

In the context of the rapid emergence of new media on the Internet, the Hmong in the United States have demonstrated a capacity to adapt to the changing landscape of communication. They have established a modern communication system that includes comprehensive news websites, community media, and electronic academic journals. The advent of contemporary new media has constituted the virtual space of the Hmong community, facilitated cultural exchange and the dissemination of the Hmong group, and gradually shaped a more modern, civilised and open image of the Hmong, with an increasingly wide range of influence and dissemination.

category	American Hmong New Media
Comprehensive news website	VOICE Hmong News Hmong American Experience Hmong Times Online Hmong TV Network Hmong USA TV
Electronic academic journals	Hmong Resource Center Library Hmong Archive Hmong Studies Journal Hmong Studies Internet Resource Center
non-profit organization	Hmong Cultural Center Hmong American Partnership Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association Hmong American Friendship Association
Online shopping store	Hmong ABC
internet radio station	internet radio station Hmong Wisconsin Radio Hmong Radio KFXN AM690 Radio Station Hmong Teleconference Radio

Figure 1. Hmong American New Media [26]

4. Miao Image in Cyberspace

The transition from textual images to network images represents a significant phase of evolution for Hmong visual culture, occurring concurrently with the advent of the mobile Internet era. The Hmong in the United States have experienced the most rapid stage of development of Internet technology in human society, from a traditional mountain civilisation to a modern mobile Internet. This process has involved a significant degree of collision and transformation. Ultimately, the younger generation of Hmong people in the United States has adapted to the advent of mobile Internet and has become adept at utilising this technology, thereby creating a novel representation of the Internet that, in turn, is influencing the identity and cultural identity of the younger Hmong generation.

The Hmong people in the United States utilise the new media to project an image that is both modern and ethnic, while also evoking the notion of struggle. These key concepts can be observed throughout their network. The term "modernity" refers to the transformation of traditional Hmong practices into a more contemporary form, shaped by the Hmong's engagement with the advanced scientific, technological, cultural, and economic landscape of American society. The Hmong in the United States have undergone significant socio-economic transformations, shifting from a traditional mountainous lifestyle based on slash-and-burn farming to pursuing modern professions such as handicrafts, industry, and commerce. They have also adopted the use of the English language and have become accustomed to driving cars instead of walking to family gatherings on holidays. In online spaces, Hmong youth frequently engage in live streaming activities, showcasing their interests and activities, including sporting events, games, ceremonies, and family gatherings. The Internet provides a unique opportunity to witness diverse Hmong experiences from any location worldwide.

The representation of Hmong Americans on the Internet also exhibits a distinctive ethnic character. In reality, the Hmong do not typically wear traditional attire throughout the day; this practice is more common among middle-aged and older individuals. However, on the Internet, Hmong youth disseminate images of the Hmong that have been filtered, screened, and even artistically processed. These images represent Hmong characteristics and resonate with the community. Consequently, in contrast to the offline world, a plethora of commodities, costumes, and images featuring Hmong characteristics can be readily accessed on the Internet.

Case 1: Advantages of the Hmong

Yang, 22 years old, male It was an invaluable resource through which I was able to gain insight into a multitude of lives and perceive the world in a more nuanced manner. This curiosity persisted for approximately six months throughout the initial semester of my freshman year, during which I gained insight into the circumstances faced by college students in diverse global contexts. Furthermore, I was intrigued to observe a video about the Hmong New Year, uploaded by a young Hmong man in Laos. I subsequently shared this with my parents upon my return home. They were highly enthusiastic and recounted historical narratives, expressing hope that I would pursue a career path that would benefit the Hmong community in Laos upon completion of my college education. By the second semester of my freshman year, I had developed a sense of purpose and a desire to contribute to the Hmong community while simultaneously pursuing my own personal growth. Achieving this goal was not straightforward. The initial step was to garner greater online attention, establish a personal brand presence and, subsequently, to leverage that presence to effect change. Following considerable reflection, I created the "Mighty Hmong" cartoon, which translates to "Hmong with power." The cartoon serves to illustrate that, contrary to popular belief, the Hmong are not vulnerable immigrants but rather powerful American citizens. We have obtained U.S. citizenship through the proper legal channels and are therefore entitled to the rights and privileges associated with this status. As U.S. citizens, we have the capacity to engage in legal activities and advocate for our rights.

Conversely, it was observed that the utilisation of this cartoon image, imbued with Hmong characteristics, proved an efficacious method of swiftly capturing the attention of the public. Should the account in question belong to a Hmong person, they will promptly recognise it and follow it. In the event that this is not the case, the image will also be perceived as interesting, and there must be something distinctive about it, which will also increase the probability of following the account in question. This could be perceived as an advantage for Hmong Americans, akin to a natural language advantage. We are bilingual in Hmong and English, and we are born with an inherent understanding of Hmong culture, including its diaspora. Additionally, we are regarded as a distinctive group by white Americans. Among my classmates, there is a notable inclination towards expressing curiosity about us. I have even assisted some of my female classmates in purchasing Hmong embroidery. It is evident that my account has amassed a considerable number of followers, currently reaching several thousand, with an incremental growth rate of approximately a dozen followers per day. Once one has acquired a following, it becomes possible to embark upon the process of enhancing one's personal influence. The subsequent phase is to facilitate the dissemination of resources. On the one hand, I disseminate high-quality content on my account, such as links to educational resources. On the other hand, I also assist some friends in promoting their products, such as Hmong-themed pillows, embroidery, and cookies featuring Hmong imagery. In the relatively short period of less than three years, my account has attracted considerable attention and trust from my followers. In addition, I have experienced personal growth and have developed the capacity to improve. Furthermore, I have established connections with numerous overseas Hmong individuals. These outcomes were not anticipated at the outset. I will persevere in my endeavours to exert influence and effect change among my acquaintances, and I will also facilitate the realisation of certain objectives among the Hmong community.

Case 2: Hmong Mermaid

On the social media platform Facebook, an account called "Hmong Creations" initiated an intriguing campaign. This campaign involved the appropriation of the visual language of popular Western dolls and the incorporation of elements of traditional Hmong clothing to create a doll that would resonate with Hmong children. The founder was inspired by a Hmong doll he had designed during his studies. He hoped to utilise the power of the Internet to attract the attention and active participation of a larger number of Hmong people, and was successful in attracting the attention of thousands. The organisers continued to select exemplary creative works for publication online, thereby enabling the public to vote for their preferred doll. Each vote entitled the voter to participate in a lottery, with the prize being the opportunity to pay \$10 and ultimately receive the most popular doll. A total of 32 designs were received for this campaign. The majority of the designs were based on the traditional attire of the various Hmong tribes, which could be readily identified as belonging to the White Hmong, Flower Hmong, or other branches. Others were more open and modern, incorporating elements from sources such as mermaid imagery or other classic Western motifs. Ultimately, the organisers made the voting process public online, with the designer named "Judee Thoj" being declared the winner. In this way, the organisers were able to attract the attention of the Hmong people and some young Americans, while also raising funds for the Hmong charity.

Additionally, the Hmong web image evokes a sense of enduring challenge and resilience. The French philosopher La Rochefoucauld once posited that it is more straightforward to gain an understanding of the human condition as a whole than to gain an understanding of a single individual in isolation. [27] In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature, Bob Dylan also observed that, as a performer, he had experienced both large and small audiences. He noted that performing for 50 people was more challenging than performing for 50,000, suggesting that the intimacy of a smaller audience requires a greater level of engagement and interaction. The number of individuals in a group of 50,000 will exhibit a tendency towards

homogeneity of personality. In contrast, a group of 50 individuals will display a greater degree of diversity in personality, identity, and worldview. This diversity allows for a more nuanced perception of external stimuli and a more rigorous examination of one's sincerity and the manner in which one conveys it, particularly in the context of one's own talent. A review of the active Twitter and Facebook accounts of Hmong Americans revealed a wealth of individual experiences and perspectives that defied imagination. Among these individuals, I was particularly impressed by Usatv, a young Hmong man who has a strong admiration for Jack Ma; Xiong, a Hmong doctor who is highly proficient in public speaking; and Yang, who has a vision of transforming Hmong craftsmanship through commercialisation. It would be remiss to suggest that the Internet is devoid of vile content. However, the author's attention was drawn to these positive and motivated Hmong youth, who appear to represent the future of the Hmong people in America.

In contemporary society, the majority of individuals obtain the majority of their information from the Internet on a daily basis. Our comprehension and conceptualisation of the world around us is contingent upon the digestion and assimilation of this information. It is unlikely that the majority of Americans will have any significant contact with Hmong people during their lifetime. Even those from Minnesota, who share a cultural heritage with those from Wisconsin, will have little contact with them. This is because the Wisconsin Hmong rely more on the Internet and other modern information tools for understanding each other. It is for this reason that we are increasingly focusing our attention on the online representation of the Hmong and the virtual space they construct through it. The majority of the year has been spent monitoring the activities of various Hmong organisations and online personalities, with a particular focus on their activities on Facebook and Twitter. The prevailing sentiment is one of positivity. The majority of comments from American sources are aligned with the author's perspective and are predominantly supportive and encouraging. It is, however, possible that individual Hmong women may send out pornographic images, exuding negative emotions and information. However, the Internet serves to address the issue of information dissemination among the relatively technologically backward Hmong, as it is a decentralised network that presents a comprehensive overview of Hmong images. The Internet provides a valuable resource for the American public, offering insight into the lives of the Hmong immigrant group. Unlike traditional forms of representation, such as those presented in Oldsmobile advertisements or literary works, Internet images are dynamic and continuously updated, offering a window into the Hmong experience in real time. Furthermore, the Internet image plays an important role for Hmong youth. It is often the case that individuals do not recall the stories they heard during their childhood. These stories must therefore be repeated and passed down by elders in order to be retained. From this perspective, contemporary Hmong Americans are fortunate to be able to convey positive and constructive forces to the next generation through the Internet. This enables them to present an image of a modern nation, and also to connect Hmong people around the world through the Internet. This, in turn, facilitates the development of Hmong identity and cyberspace on a larger scale. In this digital environment, each Hmong individual plays an active role, offering their insights and capabilities to the advancement of the nation. The nature of the future growth and development will be shaped by a multitude of influencing factors.

5. Conclusion

Following the Lao Hmong's integration into American society, the Hmong image underwent a transformation from traditional to modern. In this process, the American mainstream media initially ascribed the Hmong with the symbols of "backwardness" and "closedness," which were derived from the imagination of a heterogeneous culture. As the number of Hmong intellectual

elites in the United States increased, they began to play a role in shaping and expressing the image of the Hmong. They shifted the image from a stereotypical "refugee" portrayal to that of "aggressive" successful new immigrants to the U.S. However, the influence and dissemination of this image remain limited. Nevertheless, the influence and dissemination of this image remain constrained. In the current era of mobile internet, the Hmong community in the United States is beginning to utilise new media to construct a representation of itself as both modern and struggling. The evolution of the image of the Hmong has undergone a process of transition from one of being perceived as a construct of others' imaginations to one that is self-constructed. This transition is inextricably linked to the collective experiences of several generations of Hmong, and it signifies the cultural self-confidence and expression of the new generation of Hmong youth in the United States. In this process, the entire community has become a modern and struggling community, with limited influence and dissemination. In this process, the self-identification of the entire ethnic group has also undergone a transformation, shifting from "Hmong" to "American Hmong" and finally to "Hmong American." (Hmong American/US citizen).

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