



University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Lub Zej Zog: Hmong Educators Coalition Project

What is the background for this study?

This study brings together Hmong educators, community experts, teaching artists, and youth from California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. This coalition explores how community-directed designs can facilitate educational transformation with the goals of sustaining Hmong language and cultural knowledge, arts- and language-based healing related to intergenerational trauma, and intergenerational educational projects that bring community to the classroom. This study is a continuation of a preexisting 4-year participatory design research study and focuses on phases of actionable dissemination through collaborations with practitioners, policymakers, youth, and emerging Hmong scholars of the Lub Zej Zog Project.

What are the research questions?

The purpose of this study is to explore how Hmong educators, youth, and community members come to identify civic infrastructure that resonates with their identities and how their engagement can shape new forms of civic infrastructure and strengthen community. The primary research question for the study is: In what ways can community-directed designs, such as those of this coalition of Hmong educators, strengthen civic infrastructure and increase civic engagement among people typically assumed to be recipients, rather than makers, of civic life and infrastructure?

Who are your community partners?

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is partnered with MN Zej Zog, a majority Hmong-led 501c3 nonprofit community organization with the mission of language reclamation, arts-based healing, and intergenerational education with, by, and for the Hmong community. Its anchor community partner is Pang Yang, a leader for Hmong heritage language reclamation and educational transformation, and Executive Director of MN Zej Zog.

How are community members engaged in the research to action process?

The research team is composed of university faculty, Hmong educators, Hmong youth, Hmong elders, and emerging Hmong scholars, including community and academic researchers across California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The research team and coalition members collaboratively develop and finalize academic dissemination plans and scholarship, create educational and professional development resources for summer

Study At-A-Glance

Study Title
Lub Zej Zog: Hmong Educators Coalition Project

Researcher
Jenna Cushing-Leubner, PhD
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Grant Cohort 2022

Timeline 2022-2023

Study Location Madison, Wisconsin; Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro area, Minnesota; and Fresno, California

Study Topic Area(s)
Arts and Culture
Community Development
Education Across the Life Course
Immigrants, Immigration, & Refugees
Social Equity
Youth Development

camp and classroom settings, and craft and implement a community action plan. The community action plan supports the implementation of heritage language and Hmong studies education in classrooms in over 25 elementary and secondary schools and four higher education institutions across study locations. School and district administrators connected to the Lub Zej Zog Project support grade-level and school-wide implementation of community-connected learning materials. An existing community review board, including Hmong educators, youth workers, youth, and parents, also provides support for implementation.

What data and methods are used in this study?

This study draws from curricular content analysis, ethnographic language policy analysis, and ripple effect mapping to analyze data in the form of curricular projects, community-youth partnership projects, storywork sessions, and ripple effect maps. These data are analyzed using participatory analysis, engaging community researchers and emerging Hmong scholars.

How does this research translate to community action?

This study supports coalition members in translating scholarship into youth-led participatory action research projects based in Lub Zej Zog practitioner classrooms, facilitating opportunities for Hmong students and practitioners to build or grow civic infrastructure in their communities. This study also promotes mentorship and support systems across the coalition and provides educational and professional development opportunities to emerging Hmong scholars.

What are potential opportunities to apply study findings and/or build on this research?

Through this study, the research team and coalition members reflect on questions of participation and involvement regarding internal community dynamics and questions of sovereign refusal and grassroots participation. This research builds on our understanding of civic infrastructure and how it strengthens communities, with a particular focus on how civic engagement strengthens networks and makes them visible in ways that promote lateral expansion and engagement across internal community identity and affiliation groups.

For more information on the study:

Study Website	MN Zej Zog			
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