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Our HMoob American College *Paj Ntaub*: student-engaged Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) as counter-invisibility work

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the institutional and historical context, methods, findings, and action-consequences of 'Our HMoob American College Paj Ntaub,' a qualitative, student-led Participatory Action Research (PAR) project documenting the sociocultural and institutional factors that influence HMoob American college students' experiences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Drawing on concepts from Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit), we identify sociocultural and institutional processes that misrepresent and erase HMoob American experiences, producing a profound and troubling experience of institutional invisibility which has serious consequences for students' wellbeing and educational attainment. However, we also document that student-led PAR research can be an effective means of enacting what we term 'counter-invisibility work,' by producing compelling counter-narratives that expand social networks for activism, outreach, and policy enactment.

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Participatory action research; Asian critical race theory; race in higher education; critical race theory; equity in higher education

Introducing our HMoob¹ American College *Paj Ntaub*

This article discusses an ongoing community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) project conducted by education researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison)² in partnership with the HMoob American Studies Committee (HMASC), a UW-Madison student activist initiative focused on advocating for the HMoob student community and creating an academic program focused on HMoob American Studies, that examined the college experiences of HMoob American students at UW-Madison. Here we present findings from the first year of our qualitative study in which we found HMoob American college students to face significant experiences of exclusion at UW-Madison. We argue that HMoob American college students were made institutionally invisible through processes which obfuscated students' experiences and identities. At UW-Madison, HMoob Americans are perceived as 'Asians' by their fellow students and categorized by the university as 'targeted minorities' under the distinction of 'Southeast Asian.' This institutional invisibility was paralleled by the general campus community not having any

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knowledge of HMoob history and culture, and putting HMoob American students in the position of educating their peers and professors about the HMoob. At the same time, participants also reported experiencing macro- and/or microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) in classrooms, residence halls, and on the streets near campus. These experiences led participants to feel unwelcomed and excluded at UW-Madison, and pushed them to forge their own creative spaces of belonging and support. In this team authored article, we detail our CBPAR approach and draw on Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) (Chang, 1993; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Museus & Iftikar, 2014; Teranishi, 2002) to explore the college experiences of HMoob American students at UW-Madison.

The project emerged from engagement between education researchers and HMASC student activists. HMASC began in the fall of 2015 as a response to regular occurrences of exclusion and racism experienced by HMASC students and their close associates on campus with the primary goals of addressing the concerns of HMoob American students and creating a HMoob American Studies certificate program. By Fall 2018, and after facing considerable struggles to have their experiences recognized by administrators in their advocacy for policy changes on campus, HMASC students were introduced by a mutual acquaintance to the educational researchers involved in this study. Through discussions with these researchers, who had previously conducted CBPAR work with other UW-Madison students, a partnership was formed in which the professional researchers would mentor student activists to conduct qualitative research aimed at examining the experiences of HMoob American students and using the findings to push for actionable change to improve the learning conditions of this population.

We title our research study, 'Our HMoob American College *Paj Ntaub*' to honor and continue one of the HMoob's most well-known cultural traditions; the *Paj Ntaub*, or 'story cloth,' is a quilted tapestry that is distinguishable for its geometric designs, vibrant colors, and intricate handiwork. Traditionally, it was used to make clothing and communicate short messages, but when HMoob fled from Laos due to persecution in the 1970s, they were relocated into Thai refugee camps, where a new form of *Paj Ntaub* emerged. HMoob refugees began depicting their experiences of trauma, displacement, and resilience through *Paj Ntaub* (Peterson, 1988). Rather than a physical story cloth, our study—Our HMoob American College *Paj Ntaub*—is a symbolic threading together of HMoob American students' narratives that pays homage to the HMoob legacy. In our *Paj Ntaub* project, we weave together counterstories around our research question: *What are the socio-cultural and institutional factors that influence HMoob American college experiences?*

In this article we argue that the use of student-engaged CBPAR in higher education settings offers a much needed methodology and pedagogical approach that privileges the knowledge and experiences of college students from minoritized backgrounds, interrogate issues of power and privilege, and coordinate action towards equitable changes (Anderson, 2017). Our project employed autoethnographic journaling (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013) through which the HMoob American college students on the research team documented and theorized their own experiences as minoritized college students at a predominately white institution (PWI), which informed every aspect of the research: from the development of research questions and methods, to data collection, analysis, and writing, to the development of research-informed advocacy for policies to support HMoob American students on campus. By framing our CBPAR project with theoretical insights from AsianCrit, we as a research team engage in what we term *critical counter-invisibility work*, which involves: 1) the cultivation of a heightened critical consciousness among HMoob American students, 2) documentation and analysis of the institutional processes that produce institutional invisibility for HMoob American students, 3) production of counterstories that critique and expose those institutional invisibility processes and their embodied affects, and (4) expansion of community networks for advocacy and policy action. We suggest that counter-invisibility work is a necessary and critical action-component to anti-racist research and educational advocacy.

Understanding HMoob American history

In accordance with the (re)constructive history tenant of AsianCrit, which 'is founded on the reality that Asian Americans are typically invisible and voiceless in U.S. history' and works to 'create a collective Asian American historical narrative and reanalyze existing histories to incorporate the voices and contributions of Asian Americans' (Iftikar & Museus, 2018, pp. 940), it is imperative to first contextualize the educational experiences of HMoob Americans by bringing visibility to the history of HMoob displacement and resettlement. This history shows why HMoob Americans may require more support to access and succeed in higher education and that the experiences of marginalization and exclusion in contemporary higher education reproduce deep historical patterns of colonialization and displacement. HMoob history has been largely excluded from American public education, overlooking the HMoob's contribution to the United States during the Vietnam War and rendering invisible the exploitation of the HMoob by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Vang, 2010). Our goal is to situate current HMoob American struggles and experiences within the larger socio-historical context of displacement and resettlement.

The HMoob are an ethnic group with histories tracing back to Southern China. Over centuries, the HMoob were politically displaced throughout Southeast Asia. HMoob history converged with U.S. history during the Vietnam War when the CIA recruited HMoob and other groups living along the Vietnam-Lao border as guerrilla soldiers for the CIA's covert operation in 1964 (Vang, 2010). The United States withdrew troops in 1973 following the cease fire agreement; and in 1975, when communists came into power in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, many people, including the HMoob, left these countries to escape persecution (Fong, 2008; Vang, 2010). As a result, many HMoob fled to Thailand in search of refuge; once registered as political asylum seekers with the United Nations, many HMoob families were resettled in third countries such as the United States (Desbarats, 1985; Hmong Resettlement Task Force, 2005). From 1990 to 2010, the U.S. HMoob population grew 175% with nearly 300,000 HMoob Americans now living in the United States. Today, the majority of HMoob Americans live in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, & Yang, 2013).

The majority of HMoob refugees who were resettled in the United States spent many years, even decades, in Thai refugee camps before their resettlement (between 1982–2007), and most of them 'had lower English proficiency, less experience with formal education, and fewer transferable skills' (Ngo & Lee, 2007, pp. 419), making it harder to access jobs in the United States. The most recent group of HMoob refugees included 3,190 HMoob refugees from Thailand who began arriving in 2004 and were resettled in as many as 20 counties throughout Wisconsin (Hmong Resettlement Task Force, 2005). Currently, the HMoob make up the largest Asian American population in Wisconsin (approximately 36%).

During the early resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees in the United States (the late 1970s and onward), several federal policies were created under the guise of supporting and assisting refugees, which ended up negatively impacting many Southeast Asian refugees (Chan, 1991; Reder et al., 1984; Vang, 2010). For example, the *1980 Refugee Act* was passed with the goal to 'assist [refugees] to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States' (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2012). As a result of this policy, refugee cash assistance was slashed from 36 months to 18 months in 1982. This policy was enacted around the same time that the majority of HMoob refugees were resettled in the country. As Ngo and Lee (2007) noted, many of these refugees did not have the required English skills and/or transferable job skills valued in the United States for employment. As a result, many of these HMoob refugees ended up working in low-skill, manual labor jobs (Reder et al., 1984). The authors of *The Hmong Resettlement Study* (Reder et al., 1984) suggest that while at first, it may seem that HMoob refugees who were working in low-skill jobs have achieved self-sufficiency, this 'success' was only temporary because working right away meant not having access to education that could help equip newly-arrived refugees with the skills and credentials needed for better paying

jobs. The consequences of the refugee policies, such as this one, still linger today in HMoob American communities, affecting various aspects of HMoob American experiences, including educational attainment.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 25% of HMoob Americans live below the poverty line (Pfeifer et al., 2013). Furthermore, an analysis by Vang (2013) shows that HMoob Americans are disproportionately represented within production, transportation, and material moving occupations with 31% of the HMoob population working within this sector while only 12% of the total U.S. population occupy these positions. In Wisconsin, HMoob American educational attainment rates are low when compared to the general population. Of HMoob Americans 25 years or older in Wisconsin, 38% do not have a high school degree compared to only 11% of Wisconsin's total population (Xiong, 2012). Moreover, while 25% of the overall Wisconsin population has obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher, only 13% of HMoob Americans in Wisconsin hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (Applied Population Laboratory and UW-Extension, 2015). The history of HMoob displacement, resettlement, and struggles with educational attainment illustrate the need to investigate the institutional factors that impact the HMoob in Wisconsin so that more intentional educational support can be provided for HMoob Americans.

The following sections will provide an overview of the literature on the experiences of students of color, specifically Southeast Asian American students, at Predominantly White Institutions and a general discussion and historical context of the campus climate at our site.

Students of color at predominantly white institutions

Scholars have demonstrated that students with minoritized identities often face hostile campus climates, especially at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) (Brayboy, 2003; Cabrera, 2014; Gusa, 2010; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2013). Studies examining the experiences of minoritized populations on college and university campuses have found significant issues regarding microaggressions, marginalization, and expectations of assimilation to majority-based cultural norms (Beemyn & Rankin, 2016; Gin, Martínez-Alemán, Rowan-Kenyon, & Hottell, 2017; Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem, 1998; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). These issues play a significant role in the educational success and post-college outcomes of minoritized students, as well as the existence of a welcoming, equitable, and socially-just educational environment (e.g. Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008).

In examining the higher education experiences of Southeast Asian American (SEAA) students, scholars have found issues regarding invisibility and exclusion (Museus & Maramba, 2010). In their study examining issues of cultural validation among SEAA college students, Maramba and Palmer (2014) found that the low number of SEAA students on their participants' campuses influenced students' knowledge, familiarity, expression, and advocacy of SEAA cultures. Maramba and Palmer (2014) also emphasize the importance of institutions validating SEAA cultural backgrounds in order to increase retention and persistence. Moreover, Museus and Maramba (2010) also argue SEAA student data should be disaggregated in order to account for the tremendous diversity found within the 'Asian American' classification. In their study of Filipino American college students' sense of belonging, Museus and Maramba (2010) found that educational programming that engages the cultural backgrounds of minoritized students is critical to their success in college and that dissonance between a minoritized students' cultural backgrounds and the dominant culture of the institution may pose significant challenges for students of minoritized identities.

Studies specifically examining the higher education experiences of HMoob American students have found similar themes to studies examining the general experiences of SEAA students on U.S. college campuses. Namely, Gloria et al. (2017) found the importance of support from fellow HMoob peers in order for HMoob American students to feel comfortable on campus and to

succeed in their studies. Similarly, in their study of 85 HMoob American students attending a Midwestern PWI, Lin, Her, and Gloria (2015) found HMoob American students to perceive an unwelcoming environment that could be somewhat mitigated by high levels of self-confidence and a strong social and academic support network. Lastly, DePouw (2012) offered her experiences as the faculty advisor for a HMoob student organization on a PWI campus to demonstrate how HMoob culture was essentialized, exoticized, and commodified by her predominantly white colleagues and the campus' predominantly white students. DePouw (2012) also found that the HMoob American students who participated in her organization were often charged with teaching their white teachers and peers about HMoob culture because of the lack of curricula and faculty expertise. Such studies display some of the challenges HMoob American students face on U.S. college campuses and provide clear evidence of the need for additional support for this population.

Issues of race on the university of Wisconsin-Madison campus

The site of our study—the University of Wisconsin at Madison (UW-Madison)—is an example of a PWI. As Wisconsin's flagship public research university, UW-Madison serves over 44,000 students, approximately 30,000 of whom are undergraduates. Wisconsin, a state with an approximate population of 5.7 million people, is predominantly white with 81.8% of the total population self-identifying as white non-Hispanic (American Community Survey, 2017). Likewise, UW-Madison's undergraduate population is predominantly white. For example, Figure 1 presents the racial background data on undergraduate students at UW-Madison from 1980–2018. The top line represents the total number of undergraduate students enrolled that year and the bottom line represents of the number of students who self-identified as a person of color on their admission applications (including African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian, and two or more races which was added in 2008). While the total number of students of color has increased during these time periods, it has still stayed well below 20% of the total population (4.5% in 1980, 6.9% in 1990, 8.8% in 2000, 13.7% in 2010, and 16.9% in 2018). Demographic data concerning SEAA students was not collected until 1990 when the total SEAA undergraduate population numbered 73 students. Since then, the enrollment total has grown to 234 students in 2000, 531 students in 2010, and 467 students in 2018.

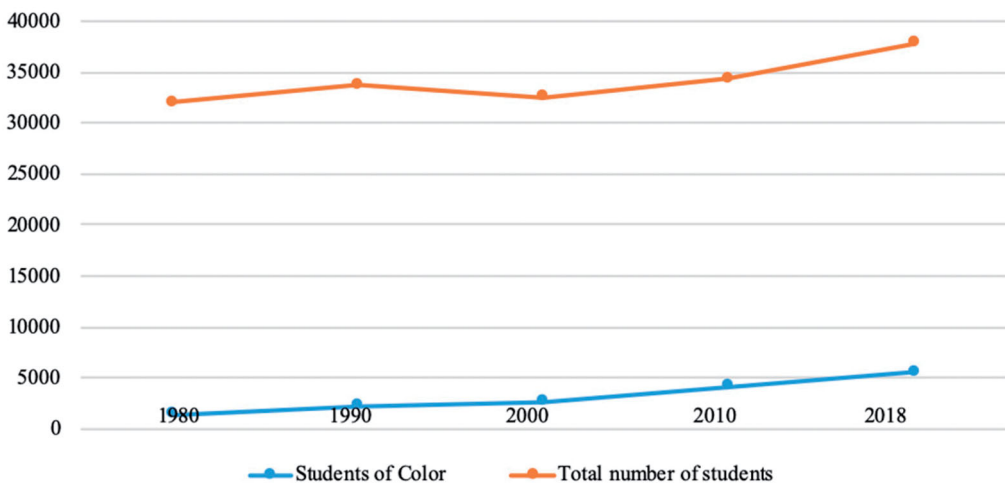


Figure 1. Racial backgrounds of UW-Madison Undergraduate Students (1980–2018). Office of Policy Analysis and Research, (2019). *Headcount enrollment totals by race*. University of Wisconsin System. <https://www.wisconsin.edu/education-reports-statistics/enrollments/>.

In addition to these demographic differences, UW-Madison has also gone through a series of highly public racially-charged incidents in the past few years including: the posting of swastikas and photos of Adolf Hitler on the door of a Jewish student's dorm room (Savidge, 2016), graffiti of a stick figure hanging from a tree by a noose with the N-word written next to it in the men's bathroom of one of the campus buildings (Arthur, 2016), and graffiti stating 'Columbus rules 1492' on a fire circle honoring Native American tribes near one of the residence halls (Mesch, 2017). Such events, along with numerous microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) that students of color have reported experiencing on campus, sparked a social media movement in 2016 called #RealUW in which students posted their experiences of racism on campus (Magnus, 2016). For their part, the UW-Madison administration has recognized issues of racism and a lack of inclusion through policy initiatives such as the 'Retain Equip Engage Lead (R.E.E.L.) Model for diversity and inclusion,' which includes diversity forums, campus climate surveys, and an emphasis on diversity trainings and outreach programming (<https://diversity.wisc.edu>). These measures are similar to those taken by many other U.S. colleges and universities that have also attempted to implement processes to improve and advance diversity and inclusion (Hurtado et al., 1998). Nevertheless, despite these efforts, stories of racially-charged incidents and macro- and microaggressions have persisted across the UW-Madison campus.

Background statistics on HMoob American students at the UW-Madison

Before beginning our qualitative inquiry, our research team sought out information pertaining to the basic background statistics of HMoob American students at UW-Madison (e.g. enrollment trends, graduation rates). However, our team found this data to be very difficult to obtain because the university does not provide publicly available data regarding its HMoob American students. Rather, the university categorizes HMoob American students as either 'Southeast Asian,' along with students of Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodian descent, or 'targeted minority' when publishing publicly available data digests and other reports.

Nevertheless, through discussions with UW-Madison and UW-System data management offices, we learned that demographic data regarding HMoob American students had been collected since 2006 at UW-Madison and since 2008 at the remaining Wisconsin state universities when the category 'Hmong' was added as a self-identified ethnic category option under the broader umbrella of 'Asian American' on admission applications. Thus, the demographic data existed, it simply had not yet been analyzed and publicly reported. Subsequently, we requested this data, waited several months for the data to be released to us, and then began analysis. To our knowledge, our study is the first time that statistics on HMoob American students at UW-Madison have been requested and analyzed (see Smolarek et al., 2019 for more details).

Through our analysis, we learned that an average of slightly under 300 HMoob American students were enrolled at UW-Madison per year from Fall 2006 – Fall 2018. Enrollment trends demonstrate a significant jump from 128 HMoob American students in 2007 to a peak of 373 students in 2013, after which HMoob American student enrollment decreased by approximately 23% to 292 students in 2018 (See Table 1). We find this decline to be troubling because, as previously noted, the HMoob American population in Wisconsin has grown significantly in the past two decades with a large segment being of traditional college age (i.e. ages 18–24), which

Table 1. Enrollments of UW-Madison undergraduates in fall semesters students identifying as HMoob.

Admission status in semester	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Continuing	90	108	152	217	267	302	288	283	271	236	203	223
New Freshman	32	63	103	85	85	62	78	61	49	48	70	62
New Transfer	6	4	8	9	9	6	7	6	8	12	10	7
Total	128	175	263	311	361	370	373	350	328	296	283	292

should have led to an increase rather than a decrease in HMoob American student enrollment. Additionally, the graduation rate of HMoob American undergraduates at UW-Madison is also concerning as the average six-year graduation rate for full-time HMoob American students who began as new freshman from 2009–2012 is only 72% compared to the total student body average of 87% (Office of Policy Analysis & Research, 2019). We also found that the majority (63%) of HMoob American students at UW-Madison were involved with student support programs which provide additional financial, academic, and social resources and supports. Moreover, a majority (79%) self-identified as first-generation college students and were Pell Grant recipients (80%) (Office of Policy Analysis & Research, 2019).

This background data significantly informed our qualitative inquiry as it assisted us in understanding the broader contexts for HMoob American students at UW-Madison as well as the potential issues facing this population. Additionally, the statistics also helped us with sampling to make sure that our sample was representative of the HMoob American student population at UW-Madison. To address the issues of invisibility and hypervisibility that HMoob American students face at UW-Madison, we frame our work using Asian Critical Race Theory. The next section provides a discussion of the theory and how we apply it to our work.

Asian critical race theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been well established in the field of education as an analytic framework to better understand the role of race, racism, and white supremacy in the schooling experiences of students of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT comes from post-Civil Rights Era critical legal scholarship that critiques the portrayal of U.S. society as a meritocracy by arguing that not everyone is equal in the eyes of the law (e.g. Crenshaw, 1988; Harris, 1993; Matsuda, 1995). Rooted in diverse critical scholarship including ethnic studies, neo-Marxism, and third-wave feminism, CRT uses storytelling to counter majoritarian narratives and reveal racial and societal privilege. Critical race counter-storytelling recounts the perspectives of racially minoritized populations to reflect on these lived experiences and raise critical consciousness regarding social and racial injustice (Yosso, 2006). According to Ladson-Billings (2009, pp. 88), CRT is built upon the following key tenets: (1) Racism is normal, not aberrant in U.S. society; (2) storytelling is an important form for exploring race and racism in the society; (3) the necessary critique of liberalism, and; (4) an emphasis on racial realism.

Over the years, CRT has evolved into distinct theoretical branches (e.g. LatCrit, TribalCrit, DisCrit) to recognize the role of particular social identities (i.e. ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, immigrant status) in societal marginalization and oppression. One of the branches that has developed is Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit), which draws on CRT and the work of other scholars on the racialization of Asian Americans (Lee, 2005; Ong, 1999; Um, 2003), to develop a unified framework that addresses the complex racialization people of Asian descent face in the United States (Buenavista, 2010; Chang, 1993; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Maramba, 2008; Museus & Iftikar, 2014; Teranishi, 2002). This AsianCrit framework, and the empirical research that it draws upon, highlight how the model minority stereotype and the viewing of Asian Americans as forever foreigners have been used as tools of racial oppression. Thus, even though the Asian American population includes diverse ethnic groups, AsianCrit uses a pan-ethnic lens because Asian Americans are often racialized as a monolithic group within dominant U.S. culture. Moreover, AsianCrit scholars argue that focusing more on race (i.e. 'Asian') rather than ethnicity (i.e. Korean, Cambodian, Vietnamese) facilitates a more focused analysis on white supremacy and systemic racism. Iftikar and Museus (2018, pp. 940–941) have recently adapted CRT's original tenets to more closely adhere to Asian American realities by incorporating the ideas of 'Asianization,' transnationalism, and the prominent invisibility of Asian Americans within U.S. history.

AsianCrit, as well as other branches of CRT, promotes the importance of recognizing people of color as ‘holders and creators of knowledge’ (Delgado Bernal, 2002, pp. 105) and seeks to tell their stories in order to ‘talk back’ to dominant ideologies and to reveal social power dynamics. In order to do this, personal stories in the form of ‘counterstories’ are used to offer the experiences of marginalized individuals whose voices are often unheard and to point to the ways that the dominant ideology creates ‘master narratives’ about people of color. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) contend that counterstories also serve the important functions of building community among marginalized groups, presenting alternative possibilities, and teaching all individuals that combining story and current reality can help construct new and richer worlds. They argue that a critical race methodology can bring necessary conversations about racism into the discourse on education and educational reform. As part of telling counterstories, CRT theorists have also begun using the racial micro-aggressions experienced by people of color as a tool to expose everyday racism. Pérez Huber and Solórzano (2015) define racial microaggressions as systemic ‘everyday manifestations of racism ... in which verbal or nonverbal assaults are directed toward a person of color,’ they are often propagated unconsciously and cumulative in their effects on those targeted (n.p.). An analysis of racial-microaggressions not only reveals the subtle acts of racism found in everyday life but also connects those everyday acts to larger structural and institutional processes.

In this article we couple AsianCrit with a form of social action which we call *counter-invisibility work*, which involves pairing the critical tools and perspectives of CRT with the action-oriented approach of student-led CBPAR in order to expose the processes that produce intuitional invisibility by using counterstories to impact advocacy and policy. The following section provide a discussion of our approach to CBPAR as well as our research methods.

Community-based participatory action research

Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) is a partnership approach to research that typically involves engagement between academic researchers and community actors with the aim of gaining a more grounded understanding of a given phenomenon (Appadurai, 2006; Cooke & Kothari, 2001). While social science research has traditionally derived part of its authority from an opposition between the researcher and the researched, CBPAR complicates this paradigm by partnering academic researchers and community actors through shared, collaborative decision-making that positions community members as researchers rather than objects of the research (Anderson, 2017). While CBPAR approaches have been used in a variety of social settings, including youth organizations (Ventura, 2017), K-12 schools (Green et al., 1995), healthcare settings (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011), and prisons (Fine & Torre, 2006), they have not often been used in university settings (Anderson, 2017). We contend that CBPAR offers an exciting and needed approach to studying issues in higher education because it not only includes the perspectives and experiences of higher education students—those who are often excluded from policy debates—but it also positions students in a researcher role to guide the research questions, approaches, data collection, and analysis. This approach produces theory that is conceptually innovative as well as action-oriented, which can inform activism, pedagogy, policy debates, and policy implementation.

In our study, the ‘community’ that makes up our project are HMoob American college students at UW-Madison. HMoob American college students from the HMoob American Studies Committee (HMASc) make up a large part (7 people) of the research team and collaboratively developed this study along with the academic researchers. All members of the team completed UW-Madison Human Subjects Training, per Institutional Review Board requirements, and were responsible for reading relevant literature, developing sampling criteria and interview and observation protocols, recruiting participants, and gathering, analyzing, and presenting the data as the

study proceeded. The research team met weekly to discuss literature, data collection, and emerging themes. Academic research mentors were responsible for engaging student-researchers with relevant theory and empirical studies, and providing guidance throughout research design, data collection, and analysis.

The student-researchers' role in developing protocols was vital in order to discern appropriate methods and questions for the participants—other HMoob American college students at UW-Madison. Furthermore, because the student-researchers were active members of HMASC, they had previous knowledge of social justice work and the literature that accompanies it. It was thanks to this familiarity with the community and the literature that the research project progressed quickly, transitioning from creating the base of the project, to interviewing the participants, to coding and writing up research briefs, opinion pieces, and scholarly articles. Additionally, from the perspective of the student activists of the HMASC, involvement in the study was viewed as an opportunity to explore how social science methods could enhance the impact of their advocacy and expand their understanding of issues important to their organization.

Furthermore, to engage in CBPAR is to engage in a process of decolonization, personal transformation, and interrogation of power and privilege (Fine & Torre, 2006; Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2008). This translates into a heightened consciousness with regard to personal positionality within an intersectional framework and an articulation of our social locations and relationships to privilege (Anderson, 2017). Through autoethnographic data from their research journals (Anderson, 2012), student-researchers documented how participating in this CBPAR project has been personally transformative and eye-opening for them. Students made these auto-ethnographic journal entries in response to interviews, observations, and team meetings as a way to process and reflect on what they had learned and discussed. We used these reflections as both a form of data and a tool to identify emerging themes (Clandinin, 2009). For example, in one of her journal entries, a student-researcher wrote about a moment in the research process where she reflected on her own positionality and blind spots:

Interviewing participants made me realize that I was also blind to HMoob student struggles. I didn't know that some participants felt a certain way. I thought everyone thought like me since we're all HMoob. We definitely share the same struggles but the differences in struggles definitely stood out to me the most, such as feeling excluded in the Business school. I can't relate to those people and I can't imagine how I would feel if I were in their shoes. It definitely put things into perspective for me and made me realize my privilege. (Autoethnographic journal 1/11/19)

Another student-researcher considered what it means to be a researcher doing research within the minoritized community that one identifies with:

Within the UW-Madison HMoob American student community, I am a peer. I have relationships with these folks and feel a personal responsibility to represent them and their experiences. As a researcher, it is a personal as well as an empirical responsibility to make sure that the HMoob American student community is being reflected in the study accurately. I want to ensure that the study does not do my peers and me a disservice. (Autoethnographic journal 9/28/18)

Such journal entries illustrate the transformative power of this research approach on community-based researchers and, as we will document below, on communities and institutions as well.

Research design

Because CBPAR is an approach to research (not a method *per se*), we developed a vertical case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014) involving policy document analysis, qualitative semi-structured interviews, and participant observations as our research method to allow us to dive deep into the individual experiences of HMoob American college students, connect those experiences to institutional level policies and practices, and examine those experiences over time. Furthermore,

we drew on AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Museus & Iftikar, 2014; Teranishi, 2002) and empirical studies on the college experiences of HMoob and SEAA students (DePouw, 2012; Gloria et al., 2017; Maramba & Palmer, 2014) to develop the our qualitative protocols and methodology (Maxwell, 2013; Rossman, 2006). Additionally, the students on the research team engaged in auto-ethnographic journaling (Anderson, 2012) and group discussions—querying and documenting patterns in their experiences on campus—in order to further develop the conceptual framework and research protocols. Through literature reviews, discussions of student-researchers' personal experiences on the UW-Madison campus, and discussions of the background data on HMoob American students at UW-Madison, we created the following research question: *What are the socio-cultural and institutional factors that influence HMoob American college experiences?*

Sampling

Based on this research question, we created an interview protocol that pertained to participants' educational backgrounds and cultural identity, as well as participants' social, academic, and professional lives. We used a combination of targeted, convenience, and snowball sampling to identify and recruit 27 current HMoob American undergraduate students at UW-Madison to participate in this study, which is approximately 10% of the HMoob-identified students on campus. The sample was targeted in that we set a goal of recruiting a sample that generally reflected some key parameters of variation that we knew from the institutional research data on HMoob American students on campus, including gender, academic program and class standing, urban, suburban, vs. rural county of residence in Wisconsin, first-generation college status, transfer student status, and participation in pre-college and college support programs. We also made efforts to recruit students who identified as Christian and those who followed the HMoob traditional religion; LGBTQ-identified students; refugee students; and students who did not generally associate with other HMoob students on campus.

Convenience and snowball sampling were employed to recruit participants guided by these sampling parameters in that the student-researchers were able to utilize their own social networks on campus to identify and recruit participants, and to snowball sample additional participants afterwards. This combination of targeted, convenience, and snowball sampling—utilizing the on-campus social networks of the student-researchers—allowed us to recruit a sample that generally reflected the demographic and academic background of the population, while as the same time, helped us to access students with difficult to identify or unique experiences (e.g. multi-racial students or student who did not associate with their HMoob peers).

Data collection

After obtaining consent to participate in the research, we conducted semi-structured interviews with participants that ranged from 45 min to an hour; interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. In addition to the interviews, the student-researchers produced auto-ethnographic journals (Anderson, 2012) which connected the themes and experiences documented in the research to their own experiences and insights as HMoob American students at UW-Madison. We also collected and analyzed a larger sample of documents, such as journalistic and institutional representations of HMoob American students, and documents related to diversity policies at UW-Madison, including the management of 'bias incidents' on campus. Lastly, we conducted walk-along participant observations with a subset of interview participants (Kusenbach, 2003), to document social spaces and experiences on campus that participants identified as meaningful. Observations included spaces such as student support programs, the gym, or events that were

valuable to interviewees such as filing a bias report, attending sorority and fraternity events, and events hosted by student organizations.

Data analysis

The interview transcripts, fields notes, auto-ethnographic journals, and documents collected were analyzed by the team of researchers, first by segmenting transcripts into manageable units based on the sequence of the interview protocol, second by both open coding (Corbin et al., 2015) and applying a code book using constructs previously identified in the literature (e.g. experiences of exclusion; microaggressions), third by establishing inter-coder consensus by reviewing one another's coding and resolving differences, and lastly by drafting and discussing analytical memos to integrate the data into emerging research findings (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008).

Researcher positionality

Our 11-person research team was comprised of two PhD trained educational researchers who self-identify as white, two doctoral students who self-identify as HMoob American, and seven undergraduate student-researchers who also self-identify as HMoob American and who were a part of the HMAASC activist organization. All members of the team grew up in the state of Wisconsin, in various geographical locations, and had at least three years of experience on the UW-Madison campus. Having a team comprised predominantly of HMoob American researchers allowed for a strong insider understanding of cultural dynamics of the HMoob community in general as well as the HMoob American undergraduate community more specifically. While outsiders to the HMoob community, the two professional researchers each had considerable experience working with immigrant communities in the United States, conducting qualitative research studies, and using critical theories in education. As a participatory action research team, one of our fundamental beliefs was that everyone on the team was considered an intricate and valuable member. This belief helped our team develop a strong repertoire that fostered an open and caring environment and a research study that was able to draw on everyone's strengths and lived experiences.

Limitations

In terms of the limitations, we acknowledge that the sample size is limited to approximately 10% of the current undergraduate HMoob American student population and the interviews and observations in this sample occurred at only one point in time, so the sample size and timeframe of the study limit the scope of the research. We plan to address these limits in future research by expanding our sample and by tracking participants longitudinally.

Findings

We found that the HMoob American students who participated in our study often reported feeling unwelcome or excluded at UW-Madison. Participants stated that they felt the campus community did not have any knowledge of HMoob history and culture, which put them in the position of educating their peers and professors on who the HMoob are. Additionally, participants reported experiencing macro- and/or microaggressions in classrooms, residence halls, and on the streets near campus. Our participants also reported feeling unwelcome in certain schools, buildings, and professional student organizations. In contrast, the spaces in which our participants stated that they felt most comfortable, safe, and welcome were student support programs, race-specific student organizations, and HMoob specific classes. Participants described these

spaces as places where they were able to cultivate their ethnic identity and find mentorship and other support systems. The following sections elaborate on these findings and incorporate CRT counterstories from our participants (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These counterstories contrast dominant ideas or master narratives pertaining to HMoob American students, as well as other college students of color, by demonstrating the resistance and resilience of our participants as well as illustrating the growth of critical consciousness.

Spaces and experiences of exclusion

The majority of our HMoob American student participants reported feeling excluded at UW-Madison. Predominantly white campuses are marked, occupied, and made free for the movement of white bodies which simultaneously excludes students of color, a concept scholars have referred to as the *ontological expansiveness* of whiteness (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2017; Sullivan, 2006). In particular, many of our participants identified physical spaces that feel unwelcoming on or near campus that they avoid, such as the Business School, residence halls, athletic stadiums, and streets known for night life. Participants gave accounts of macro- and microaggressions that occurred in these spaces. These accounts ranged from overt racist language to receiving unwelcoming stares to being asked to speak HMoob as a novelty. For example, one of our participants Lee (Freshman) stated:

I lived in [name of residence hall] freshmen year and it was [sigh]. I just felt like I didn't really fit in. For example, I introduced myself to my neighbors and they would talk really slow to me like, 'Hello, it's really nice to meet you' in a slow tone. I just felt like, I was born here; why are you acting like this to me?

Such racial microaggressions were not uncommon among our participants. In fact, the majority of our participants had either personally experienced or knew someone who had experienced such an aggression on campus. For example, one of our participants Tyler (Junior) explained their surprise and horror at the amount of racism they experienced at college:

I honestly didn't think that UW-Madison would be this bad. There were always a bunch of kids of color whenever we dropped off my sister for [a pre-college program], but that was a fucking lie. I'm an outreach mentor and I always tell students of color, 'get ready to see a lot of white people and brace yourselves for white ignorance.' Oh my god. I remember my freshman year; I was so fucking scared to leave the dorm. I also remember at the diversity forum, I told them that their [student orientation] is so misleading... [all the students of color] fit into one room in [the student activity center] ... they make it seem like it's diverse and it's not. Like the fact that all your students of color can fit in one room is a fucking problem.

Tyler went on to explain that they avoid interactions with white students on campus because of being consistently mistaken as 'Chinese,' being asked to speak Chinese, and or being asked 'what are you?' in reference to their ethnicity.

Both Lee's and Tyler's counterstories discuss experiencing what many scholars of Asian American studies have termed the 'forever foreigner' stereotype (Tuan, 1998) in which people of Asian descent are racialized as non-Americans despite their country of birth or how long their families have been in the U.S. (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). Lee discusses being made to feel as though she could not speak English while Tyler explained how they were first mistaken for Chinese and then asked to speak Chinese as a novelty. The presumption that one does not speak English or speaks a language other than English as their native tongue goes to the idea that the person is a foreigner and therefore a 'non-American.' According to CRT scholars, these sorts of racial microaggressions can be used as a tool to better understand and expose the everyday racism people of color experience as well as to connect to structural and institutional dynamics of racism (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

These micro- and sometimes macroaggressive encounters that make HMoob American students feel that they are perpetual foreigners and do not belong on campus have led to these students consciously choosing to avoid many spaces on campus. Hence, the spaces that HMoob

Americans are limited to are private spaces (like apartments or homes), program-specific spaces, and spaces designated for multicultural students.

Upon reflection on how common it was for participants to feel that they were limited to a few safe spaces on campus where they would not encounter micro- or macroaggressive interactions, one of the student researchers wrote in their journal

...opportunities to gather in a safe space or spaces intended for students of color is limited at UW-Madison. Yet, I'm also a little sad because safe spaces are only conditional or restricted to one location. Nowhere else on campus really feels like home.

One of the consequences of students not feeling welcomed in institutional spaces is that it impacted their access to resources that could be helpful or critical for their academic success and professional development (such as tutoring services and career and academic advising).

Similarly, participants recalled instances of racial macroaggressions that also demonstrate how systemic racism plays out in people of color's everyday lives. One racial macroaggression that stood out in our conversations with our participants was the recent vandalization of the Multicultural Living Community (MLC) in one of the residence halls wherein a group of white male undergraduates removed the 'M' from the 'Multicultural' sign and drew inappropriate and derogatory pictures. Yer, a first-year student who, herself, did not live on the MLC but spent a lot of time in the space because she found it welcoming, described the incident:

... on the MLC floor ... they made a post of 'M.L.C.' and then um. someone not in the MLC took the 'M' off to make it look like 'Loser Club.' And then, they decorated like ... they started taking off decorations to make a ... a penis ... in the den. It was just really ... It was just really bad. You know ... And my friends always tell me on second floor [the MLC floor] ... they talk about the second floor but they don't refer to them as humans. They always talk about them as 'they' as just, generalizing them as 'they.' Which makes me feel like, some people are really rude.

Participants explained how the defiling of this space, which is well-known within the UW-Madison undergraduate community as a place for students of color, was upsetting to students of color across campus as it was commonly considered a safe and welcoming space to them. In response to this incident, Housing administrators called a meeting with the MLC residents (mostly students of color), during which residents were told that they need to learn how to share the space and for them to not take up too much space. No further action was taken by administrators to address the situation. After this incident, participants reported feeling upset, unwelcome, and even threatened.

Invisibility and misrepresentation

In addition to experiencing racial micro- and macroaggressions, participants also reported feeling excluded or unwelcome in general student organizations (i.e. non-race specific organization such as professional organizations) and 'mainstream' (i.e. non-HMoob specific) courses, which they felt lack diversity. Participants were disappointed by the lack of knowledge on campus about HMoob culture and history, and/or were upset by the ways in which HMoob people are portrayed in 'mainstream' courses. Participants explained that they are often made responsible to educate their peers and teachers on who the HMoob are because many of them know nothing or very little about HMoob people. When HMoob history or culture was included in mainstream courses, participants typically reported it being done in overly simplistic and/or offensive ways that framed HMoob solely through the lens of U.S. Cold War history. For example, Maria (Freshman) told us:

A lot of people don't even know who HMoob people are ... so a lot of people are just like, 'Oh what is that?' 'Where are you from?' ... and it's really difficult because a lot of people aren't aware of who HMoob people are.

Likewise, participants and student-researchers discussed their discontent with the university's consistent use of the 1997 journalistic account *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman as the campus's 'go-to' text concerning the HMoob experience in the U.S. The book tells the story of the cultural conflicts that occur between the family of a young HMoob woman who was diagnosed with epilepsy and her doctors concerning her treatment. The book has a history of being used as the 'Hmong content' for introductory level classes in anthropology, sociology, Asian studies, teacher education, social work, and nursing at UW-Madison and other universities within communities with significant HMoob populations—and in spite of the problems with the book it remains in use periodically today. Medical anthropologists and HMoob studies scholars have been critical of the book and its use in teaching undergraduates and medical students, arguing that the wide appeal of the book is based on an overly simplistic, ahistorical, reified, and essentialistic representation of HMoob culture, to build a dramatic 'culture clash' 'tragedy' narrative (Chiu, 2005; Taylor, 2003). Participants in our study also expressed concerns over how this text assists in tokenizing HMoob American experiences as well as fueling biases and stereotypes about the HMoob being 'backwards' and 'barbaric.' In general, participants were upset that more culturally appropriate texts concerning the HMoob were not used and that instructors did not have a stronger understanding of HMoob history and culture to more critically engage with such texts.

Similarly, participants expressed disappointment in how HMoob people, culture, and history were presented in the academic curricula (if at all). Students who took courses that briefly touched upon HMoob topics stated that instructors were not knowledgeable enough to teach these topics. In turn, similar to what DePouw (2012) found, HMoob American students were forced into the responsibility of having to educate their peers and instructors in order to prevent misrepresentation. Lena, for example, described the exhausting, frustrating, recurrent experience of being asked to teach educators and peers basic facts about HMoob history and culture:

I didn't answer because I'm tired of repeating the same history over and over again. I wish people just knew. Like when a white person says they're from America, there aren't any questions asked. But when I tell people that I'm Hmong, it's always followed by a laundry list of questions like 'what's that? So you're Mongolian? What country is that?'

HMoob American students often had to reconstruct the narratives that their peers had learned from their instructors in order to better (and more accurately) represent the HMoob. This experience demonstrates the AsianCrit tenet of reconstructive history in that Asian American history is rendered invisible and voiceless affectively eliminating the experiences of Asian American in mainstream historical knowledge (Iftikar & Museums, 2018).

Spaces and experiences of belonging

In contrast to the general feeling of exclusion and not belonging, our HMoob American student participants also described spaces on campus where they felt welcome and supported. Participants noted the importance of these spaces in acquiring academic and social wellbeing. In general, the spaces participants most identified as welcoming included private spaces (i.e. apartments or dorm rooms), areas that specific racial and ethnic student organizations occupy, and HMoob-specific courses. Participants also reported feeling welcome by student support programs, which they stated offered them friendship and mentorship as well as resources (e.g. tuition, tutoring, printing). For example, Lisa (Freshman) stated:

Since I'm in [student support program], I take this counseling psychology class with other students of color [in the same program] and it's all college students. It's a space for us to talk about our experiences here so far on campus. Every month, we have that space to talk about all the negativity and all the positivity.

According to our participants, such student support spaces have provided positive experiences for HMoob American college students through constructive mentorship and friendships,

similar to the CRT concept of racially clustered *counter-spaces* which provide a location for mutual identity-affirmation within a hostile institutional culture (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The physical spaces provided by these student support programs are used by students to study, socialize, network, explore career and academic opportunities, and build community with program staff and peers. HMoob American students have repeatedly voiced that student support program spaces are some of the few spaces on campus where they feel safe, welcomed, and valued. Moreover, students note that the race and ethnicity of staff that work within student support programs contribute to their feelings of inclusion and safety as well as provide them with mentors they could trust and look up to. One student fondly describes the role of her student support program in her college experience:

I met the majority of my friends through being a part of the [student support program], and [it] gives me a space that makes me feel the most safe and comfortable on campus. [The program] is my home on campus. Without [it], I don't know where I would be academically—I honestly would probably have dropped out of school without that community ... [they] also helped me get my first job, too, which I am really grateful for. What I appreciate the most about [the program] is that they consistently invite other students of color to their space—it's like a home for everyone, in a sense.

Another prominent space of belonging discussed by participants was HMoob-specific courses offered by the Asian American Studies Department as well as HMoob language courses taught in the Southeast Asian Studies Department. Of our 27 HMoob American student participants, 18 had taken HMoob-specific courses. All of these participants reported positive experiences, and many expressed the value of these courses in developing an affirmative ethnic identity. For example, Aaron (Junior) stated of the courses:

It helped me learn more about myself because I feel like I've waited 20 years to take courses that are about my people, courses that I do really care about. I think that I've just learned a lot about who I am and who the HMoob and HMoob Americans are.

This finding speaks to what other scholars have found concerning the power of ethnic studies for students of color (Cammarota, 2016; Hurtado, 2005).

Even though these spaces are constructive, they still maintain the protective segregation on campus (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013) against what was perceived and experienced as the hostile environment of the Predominantly White Institution. These spaces segregate students of color from the majority. For example, the racial and ethnic-specific student organizations are all located in one particular campus building. This creates a space on campus for students of color to associate and communicate with student organizations; however, this is the only space provided for racial and ethnic specific student organizations. By placing every ethnic and racial student organization in that centralized spot, it brings a space of belonging on campus for students, but also segregates them from the rest of campus.

In the last part of this paper, we provide a discussion of our action responses to this research along with our recommendations for how universities can engage and empower HMoob American students to become critical inquirers of their lived experiences.

CBPAR as counter-invisibility work

In this section we describe what we consider to be a potentially radical and transformative aspect of student-led CBPAR as practiced in a higher education context, which is its potential to realize what we describe as *counter-invisibility work*. Perhaps this is one way we can contribute to expanding the scholarship in higher education as well as naming and identifying practices that can also contribute to scholarship on the power of CBPAR research.

In our preceding discussion of the critical insights of CRT and AsianCrit—and as exemplified in our discussion of CBPAR and in our *Findings* section—we have documented three important components of counter-invisibility work: 1) the component of the cultivation and elaboration

among the student-researchers of a heightened critical consciousness; 2) the critical/analytical component providing an analysis of the institutional processes that produce experiences of institutional invisibility; and 3) the component of the production of counterstories that expose how these processes affect and produce consequences for HMoob American students.

Lastly, we consider a fourth component of counter-invisibility work, which is the coupling of the critical/analytical and storytelling components of CRT and AsianCrit with the action-orientation of CBPAR approaches—resulting in the cultivation, expansion, and strengthening of social networks to circulate the analysis and counterstories for advocating policy changes. Student-led CBPAR employs a non-bounded, anti-essentialistic, and networked concept of the community by utilizing the students' own multiplex networks to research and craft empirically rich accounts of experience. These networks are particularly dense within the HMoob American student community on campus, but they are not bounded by it, and include other institutional actors—such as sympathetic faculty, staff, administrators, and policymakers—as well as HMoob and non-HMoob family, friends, and fellow activists in communities around the state.

Counter-invisibility work involves utilizing these networks to conduct qualitative inquiry that documents and analyzes the processes that produce institutional invisibility, and crafting counterstories that expose the effects of and struggles against institutional invisibility for minoritized students. This work also involves strengthening and expanding community-based social networks and reconfiguring them for the circulation of counter-stories and transforming them into what are described as *policy networks* (Marin & Mayntz, 1991)—social networks to argue for and force the implementation of social change for minoritized students.

Policy changes at institutions of higher education related to inclusion and diversity are often hamstrung by various bureaucratic processes that reproduce the status quo (Anderson, 2020), and the student activists of the HMASC had spent years in frustrated confrontation with this institutional bureaucracy. Counter-invisibility work, such as a coupling of CRT/AsianCrit and student-led CBPAR, realized a tangible transformation in this intuitional status quo. The *Paj Ntaub* research team presented our findings and analysis to an audience on the UW-Madison campus of HMoob students, faculty, staff, and administrators, and community organizers and journalists in Winter 2019. At this event, HMoob American student researchers presented counterstories about their own and their peers' experiences on campus. During discussion, non-HMoob audience members expressed surprise and concern at the situation of institutional invisibility and marginalization documented in presentation, whereas HMoob American students and staff took turns echoing and amplifying the experiences made visible through the counterstories by speaking of their own experiences on campus.

This presentation garnered increased campus and media attention on the experiences of institutional oppression for HMoob American students. The circulation of analysis and counterstories along existing and expanding networks—in meetings with faculty, advisors, administration, journalists, policymakers, community organizers, other student activists, and others—produced a dramatically increased institutional visibility of the experiences and concerns of HMoob American students, as well as a sense of solidarity and urgency to make practical changes to address the problems that had been documented by the research. The spectacle of the presentation event and the circulation of the counter-stories through media caused administration and policymakers to be more responsive—rather than ignoring or slow-walking—the HMASC's demands for more support for HMoob American students on campus. For the HMASC students, the most immediate result was the creation of a HMoob American Studies Minor Concentration in UW-Madison's Asian American Studies Program, to provide both institutional recognition of the experiences of HMoob Americans and to serve as an institutional home for critical scholarship and education about HMoob culture and history. Additionally, the *Paj Ntaub* team has made more partnerships and allies across campus and within the Madison area in general that have brought increased attention, funding, and support for the issues we have discussed.

Conclusion

'Our HMoob American College *Paj Ntaub*' is a living text that has only just begun to weave together the counterstories of HMoob American college students at UW-Madison—a PWI and the flagship intuition of Wisconsin's system of public higher education. These narratives include experiences of exclusion, invisibility, and misrepresentation but also highlights students' resilience and agency through the creation of their own spaces for community and thriving. Our findings point toward experiences of exclusion, invisibility, and misrepresentation as important sociocultural and intuitional factors that may negatively influence HMoob American students' wellbeing and academic and career success; and we suggest that these factors should be considered a key part of the context that influences the below-average graduation rate of HMoob American students at UW-Madison. The findings also indicate the importance of HMoob-specific courses in providing a venue for students to learn about their history and culture, to cultivate their identities and critical consciousness, and to share experiences as HMoob Americans and as minoritized students at a PWI.

UW-Madison and other universities that serve the HMoob American community can support their students by directing resources toward HMoob American studies—and such resources will also benefit the student population in general by educating them about a marginalized community in their state (in Wisconsin, the largest Asian community) as well as giving students tools and language to understand systemic inequities in society. Moreover, to further counter the processes that produce institutional invisibility for HMoob American students, universities should disaggregate their institutional research data and make them available publicly. Publicly reporting disaggregated data has the potential to decrease institutional invisibility in educational settings because it can recognize the different needs of students from different ethnic groups. Our findings support the need for disaggregated data that is in line with AsianCrit scholars who argue against the monolithic understandings of Asian American experiences (Iftikar & Museus, 2018).

There are a number of important consequences highlighted by this study of student-led CBPAR in higher education settings. Importantly, such research has the potential to amplify the voices and experiences of students, who are themselves commonly excluded from the policy debates and processes that impact their lives and futures. By including student perspectives—and in particular, minoritized student perspectives—in all aspects of the research process, student-led CBPAR can become an important and transformative tool for critical approaches to higher education studies.

And finally, we argue that the coordination of CBPAR approaches with the critical tools and perspectives of AsianCrit, facilitates the cultivation of critical consciousness among the student-researchers, provides a critical analysis of the institutional processes that produce invisibility, provides methods for the cultivation of compelling counterstories, and can be part of a processes of transforming social networks into networks for research and policy advocacy. We refer to these four research-and-advocacy processes, *in toto*, as counter-invisibility work. And we suggest that the concept of counter-invisibility work, as a potential of CBPAR approaches, can enhance AsianCrit perspectives as a tool to expand action-oriented anti-racist scholarship.

Notes

1. We spell the ethnic group of focus in this study - HMoob - in lieu of Hmong (the more common spelling, particularly in the United States). The capitalization of both H and M are intended to be more inclusive of various HMoob dialects because Mong Green/Leng is pronounced without the aspirated "h." Additionally, capitalizing H and M challenges the history of White HMoob dominance in the United States. Borrowing from the Hmong Romanized Phonetic Alphabet (RPA), our spelling HMoob rejects the Americanization of this ethnic group name and allows us to reclaim and embrace HMoob identity, history, and heritage.

- The Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has approved our consent and confidentiality agreements that we employ with our research participants, and they have determined that we may identify UW-Madison as the site of this study in all publications and public communications about the study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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