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Southeast Asian American Students' Perspectives on Influences that Lead to High School Dropout

Elizabeth D. Kuo
Claremont Graduate University

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Abstract

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High school dropouts continue to happen in the U.S. without a clear solution. Southeast Asian American (SEAA) is a population with significantly disproportionate high school dropout rates and one of the lowest enrollment rates in higher education. This study seeks to challenge the notion that "all" Asians are high-achieving by analyzing the reasons why a surprising number do not do well, i.e., drop out of school. A better understanding of the perspectives of Southeast Asian American students on the factors and influences that lead to their decision or cause to drop out of high school is the focus of this research. This qualitative phenomenological study utilizes the theories of social capital and cultural capital to explain how the lack of resources influence high school dropout. Purposeful sampling, specifically snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. In total, this study included nine participants. All interviews were conducted over the phone. Data analysis included two cycles of coding, in vivo coding and pattern coding.

The current narrative analysis resulted in two themes, family and school system and six sub themes that influence high school dropout. Findings indicated that participants experienced

one or more factors that influenced their cause of dropout. Moreover, the cause of dropout was

influenced by the lack of certain social capital and cultural capital resources and that the

participants experienced two types of dropout, pushed out and pulled out.

Dedications

To my husband and best friend.

Thank you for allowing me to dream.

And big did I dream.

To my loving son.

Thank you for providing the much needed joy

during the long and hard days.

To my soon to be born daughter.

Thank you for nudging me to complete my dissertation.

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greater goals.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

The State of California has one of the largest concentrations of Southeast Asian Americans (SEAA), a population with significantly disproportionate high school dropout rates and one of the lowest enrollment rates in higher education (Krupnick, 2005). For the purposes of this study, the term "Southeast Asians" refers to the American subgroups of Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese. According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] data in 2018, of the two percent of Asians who drop out of high school, four percent were of Southeast Asian background. For any ethnic group, high school dropout is a serious educational and social problem (Christle, et al., 2007; Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Rumberger, 1987), because students without a degree are more likely to be unemployed (Bridgeland, et al., 2006) and receive social welfare (Sum, et al., 2009). Dropouts are also at an increased risk for mental health problems, as well as engagement in gang activity and criminal behavior (Belfield & Levin, 2007). As the general Asian population in the U.S. is projected to grow by 134 percent over the next 40 years (iCount, 2016), it is imperative to examine and understand the factors and influences that lead SEAA students to drop out of high school, in order to better serve this population.

Much of the scholarly literature on high school dropouts is conducted quantitatively, focusing on a) individual characteristics, such as socioeconomic status (SES) and gender, that predispose students to leave high school; and b) external factors, such as peers, the structural factors within the family, school, community, and neighborhood. Many existing qualitative studies have focused primarily on a single ethnic group. Although the approach yields in-depth consideration of one group, a comparative analysis across ethnic groups would provide valuable

1

data on ethnic-specific views and common factors to the causes of dropout. For example, in a study of Chinese and Vietnamese high school dropouts, Uy (2009) discussed how the relationship between a student's ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status influenced their decision to leave school. Findings suggest that being a male significantly increased a student's likelihood of dropping out. Uy (2009) also found that being in a low-income bracket reduces a student's chance of graduating in four years, with Vietnamese low-income students on average having greater odds of graduating on time than Chinese low-income students. Uy (2009) suggests that the difference between the two groups' graduating on time is due to immigration/generational status. Immigration and generational status are used interchangeably. The first generation refers to someone who immigrated to the United States as an adult; 1.5 generation refers to someone who was born outside the U.S. but immigrated as a child, and the second generation is born in the United States, the children of immigrants. Among the Chinese and Vietnamese students in her study, the sample consisted of 85 percent second-generation Vietnamese students, compared to approximately 28 percent of the Chinese students. Uy (2009) suggested that second-generation Vietnamese students have an advantage of understanding the school system and are better equipped to navigate it. Moreover, she also suggested that the difference in social capital that is embedded in Vietnamese families' homes and communities helps reduce the likelihood of dropout for Vietnamese students. This alludes to the idea that generational status may be a factor in dropout. Nonetheless, few have included SEAA students, as defined more broadly in this research, in their studies on the causes of high school dropouts.

In an effort to reduce high school dropout rates, states and school districts have implemented prevention and intervention programs. For instance, The National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) currently lists hundreds of "model" programs (Wilson, et al., 2011).

2

Research by Christenson and Thurlow (2004) suggested the most effective intervention programs identify and track youth at risk of school failure, track student academic progress across school years, and identify the causes of students' disengagement and enrollment status. Although there are programs to prevent dropout, a federal evaluation that studied more than 100 dropout prevention programs showed that most programs do not reduce dropout rates by statistically significant amounts (Bridgeland, et al., 2006).

Although much research has been conducted on the topic of dropout and how to prevent it, rarely are Asian-American students differentiated within aggregated data. Thus, aggregated data tends to represent all Asian subgroups as one, which conceals significant disparities in educational experiences and outcomes between Asian populations. Due to researchers using aggregated data, Asians, in general, are seen as a "model minority," which discounts SEAAs as an at-risk population (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Model minority is the "notion that Asian Americans achieve universal and unparalleled academic and occupational success" (Museus & Kiang, 2009). In 2016, the dropout rate among Asian-American high school students was the lowest of any ethnic group, at two percent (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]). However, this national data discounts racial/ethnic groups within the general population of Asian Americans. For example, the status dropout rate for individuals of Burmese descent was 29.7%, the highest among the Asian rate, while Chinese, Filipino, and Korean descents had 0.8, 2.0, and 0.7 percent respectively. (NCES, 2016), this suggests that not all Asians are "model minorities."

Southeast Asians are the most recent group of Asians to enter the U.S. in large numbers (Kula & Paik, 2017). The majority of the Southeast Asian population came to the U.S. during the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Paik, et al., 2017) and during the Cambodian genocide as refugees (Paik, et al., 2017). The 2010 U.S. Census reported approximately 2.5

million Southeast Asians, reflecting about 15% of Asian Americans (Paik, et al., 2017). People who immigrated during this period generally had lower English proficiency, less experience with formal education, and fewer transferable skills (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Academically, Vietnamese Americans generally have considerably higher academic grades in comparison to their other Southeast Asian counterparts, but are generally lower than East or South Asian students (Paik, et al., 2017; Rumbaut, 2008). According to Rumbaut (1995), most high school dropouts are second-generation SEAA students, which may pose some intergenerational conflict. Research on intergenerational conflict has found that Asian-born American students struggle to balance traditional family values and expectations with mainstream Western values and lifestyles (Lee, 2001). Although Asian American populations are included in many studies regarding education, they are generally known as the model minority population, which unjustly puts the SEAA population at a disadvantage for academic resources (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

The myth that "all" Asians are model minorities (Museus & Kiang, 2009) has led to two general and disparate stereotypes that are unfairly applied to SEAAs as a whole. On the one hand, SEAAs are seen as high achievers and model minorities. On the other hand, they are seen as low achievers and high school dropouts who are prone to delinquency and gang involvement (Ho, 2008). For instance, among the SEAA populations who dropout of high school, 3.4 percent are Cambodian, 2.3 percent are Vietnamese, 2.0 percent are Laotian, and 3.6 percent are Hmong (NCES, 2016). Moreover, according to the NCES (2019) website, the graduation rate for Asians who earned a bachelor's degree within 6 years was 74 percent. However, because the data is not disaggregated, there is no way to show which Asian ethnic group is represented.

An example of a study conducted by Kao (1995) shows how aggregated data can give misconceptions, and how it is proven differently when disaggregated. Kao (1995) conducted a

study comparing Asians and Whites' performance in reading and math scores. When data is not disaggregated, findings indicated that Asians overall, performed better than Whites. However, once disaggregated, data indicated that only Chinese, Koreans, and Southeast Asian students performed better in math, but Pacific Islanders earned considerably lower math and reading scores.

Another supporting example that shows how aggregated data can give a misperception and is proven differently when disaggregated is a policy brief by Maramba (2011). Maramba (2011) discussed the large disparity that exists in data among the AAPI ethnic groups and the importance of disaggregating data to represent groups such as SEAAs. For instance, SEAAs with less than a high school degree are considerably high with a range between 38.1 percent to 59.6 percent (Maramba, 2011). Moreover, SEAAs are more likely to attend a community college and less likely to attend a four-year college. Lastly, among those SEAAs who attend college, they are also found less likely to earn a degree compared to other AAPIs (Maramba, 2011). Thus, a preconception that "all" Asians are high-achieving should always be considered with caution when data is aggregated.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine factors that influenced high school dropouts of SEAA youth, and the practices that could have prevented this decision. It will provide a nuanced understanding of SEAA students' perspectives through interviews to understand the factors and influences that led them to drop out of high school. Nine semi-interviews were conducted with SEAAs between the ages of 18-30 who have neither completed nor received a high school degree. Such a study can yield insights for educators to understand the cultural barriers and needs of SEAA students from an educationally underserved segment of

society. As the general Asian population is projected to become the largest immigrant group in the country, surpassing Hispanics by 2055 (Pew Research Center, 2017), it is imperative to examine the growing impact of SEAA students in the future. The study took place mostly in the state of California where a large population of SEAAs resides. Currently, there are a total of 992, 257 SEAAs residing in California in comparison to Texas, the second-largest SEAA population with 292, 464 (SEARAC, 2019).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

Main Research Question:

What are the experiences of Southeast Asian Americans (SEAA) students who withdrew from high school?

Sub-questions:

- How does social capital play a role in helping understand SEAA experiences' of withdrawing?

- How does cultural capital play a role in helping understand SEAA students' experiences of withdrawing?

- Which type of drop out (pulled out, pushed out, or fallout) do SEAA students experience more?

Definition of Key Terms
Theory of Dropout

    pushed out- when factors within the school environment that lead to consequences, ultimately resulting in dropout. This includes tests, attendance and discipline policies, and even consequences of poor behavior.

    pulled out- when factors divert students from completing school. This occurs when factors,

such as financial worries, out-of-school employment, family needs, or even family changes, such as marriage and childbirth, pull students away from school. It can even include illnesses, as these cause students to put a greater value on something outside of school, and therefore to quit school.

fallout- when the student gradually increases behaviors or desires of academic disengagement or other factors such as pregnancy and lack of motivation leads to students' dropping out of school.

Cultural Capital- composed of one's characteristics and behaviors that are learned through one's background. Cultural capital as a collection of assets can be subjected to monopolization and transmitted from one generation to another (Lareau, 2003)

Habitus- known as one's view of the world and one's place in it (Dumis, 2002)

Intergenerational Conflict- the conflict between older (parents) and younger (children) generations values and views (Chung, 2001)

Racism- the definitive attribution of inferiority to a particular racial/ethnic group and the use of this principle to propagate and justify the unequal treatment of this group' (Essed 1990, p. 11)

Social Capital- defined "by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure (Coleman, 1988)

Southeast Asian American (SEAA)- defined as mainly people who identify as Cambodian, Hmong, Vietnamese, or Laotian (Maramba, 2011)

Significance

This study makes several key contributions. First, it investigates the educational

experiences of a fast-growing underserved and misunderstood population in the U.S.. SEAAs are a unique immigrant population in the U.S. because of the sociohistorical and political contexts in which most came to the U.S. Most of the later wave of SEAA immigrants were forced to seek refuge in the U.S. at the end of the Vietnam War and during the Cambodian genocide, a history and experience which has impacted later generations of SEAA in their educational experiences and outcomes, as will be discussed below. This study will heighten educators' cultural awareness and sensitivity to better serve this population.

Second, SEAAs have remained understudied, even though they are shown elsewhere in this study to be as at-risk as other well-known minority groups such as Hispanics and Blacks (NCES, 2020) for dropping out of high school. Given the outcomes of this study, policymakers must disaggregate data to represent different ethnic groups' cultural needs and experiences in order to understand what contributes to students' academic experiences. Once data is disaggregated, policymakers can then understand the root cause of dropout for specific ethnic groups, and allocate proper resources to prevent this.

Third, this investigation represents a movement towards disaggregating data, at least by breaking down the monolith of the Asian group into more specific regional groups, to better describe conditions for an underrepresented ethnic group. This movement is crucial to developing a better understanding of the experiences and needs of SEAA students to prevent dropout. Lastly, this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on factors contributing to high school dropout occurrences from SEAAs' perspective; since this is a population that is rarely studied, the findings of this project will address an important research gap.

Chapter 2 offers a relatively extensive review of existing literature and research,

providing general knowledge and theoretical context about the current study. Chapter 3 provides the reader with a methodological review for this dissertation research study. Chapter 4 shares the primary findings from the study, and limitations of the research. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of those findings, how they relate to existing literature and research.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework at the foundation of my study attempts to understand what leads SEAA students to drop out of high school from their perspective and experience. The study is built upon the theories of dropout (Jordan, et al., 1996; Watt & Roessingh, 1994) and social capital (Israel et al., 2001; Smith et al., 1995; Coleman, 1988), and the theoretical concept of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005; Carter, 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Lareau, 1987). Social and cultural capital is used to understand how the lack of resources and social assets impacts SEAA students' cause of high school dropouts. The theories of dropout are then used to explain which type of dropout participants experience. pulled out, pushed out, or fallout. In the following paragraph, I will be discussing my conceptual framework in depth.

For this study, I used Jordan et al.'s (1994) and Watt and Roessingh's (1994) theory of dropout. These frameworks allow us to understand the factors or influences that lead SEAA students to be pulled, pushed, or fall out of school. To this end, this study involved interviewing SEAA students to understand their experiences of what factors and influences (e.g., peers, parents, school environment and staff, neighborhood, and self-decisions) occasioned their high school dropout. In addition, students were asked to reflect on the type of resources that could have prevented their dropout. Though not directly related to the theory of dropout, the types of resources needed to prevent dropout can inform educators, researchers, as well as policymakers of ways to thwart dropout occurrences (Fig. 1).
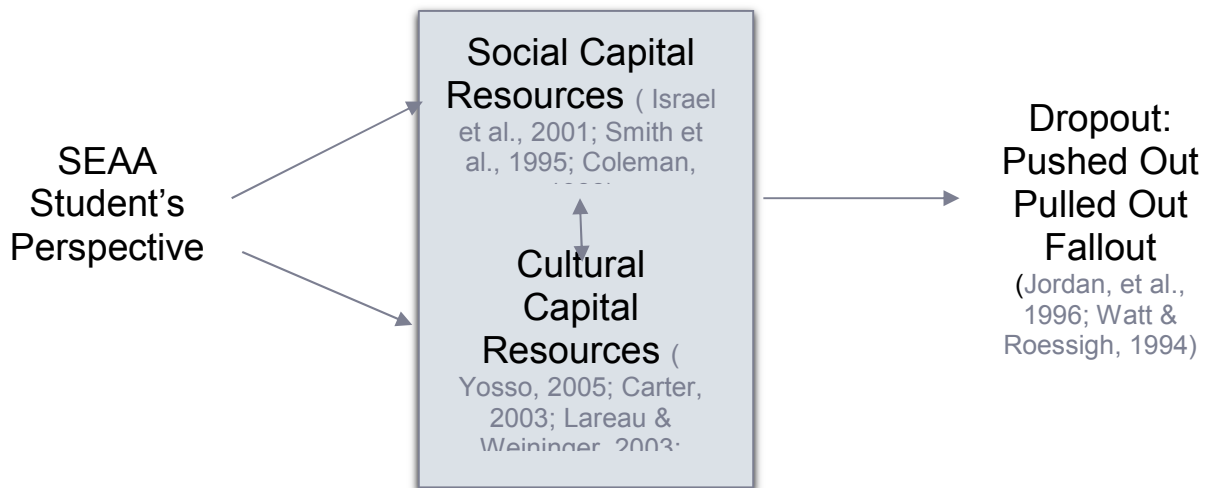
SEAA Students' Perspectives and Experiences

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework applied to SEAA students' perspectives and experiences that lead to dropout.

studies on AAPIs. A few qualitative studies that have been conducted have provided insight into

the challenges that AAPIs face in educational institutions. Based on previous research, a

subgroup, SEAAs are known to have significantly higher high school (NCES, 2019) and higher

education (Maramba, 2011) dropout rates. Due to high dropout rates of SEAAs students and an

insufficient number of studies that focus on high school dropout, this study seeks to investigate

the causes of high school dropout from SEAA students' perspectives. Such students' perspective

included their view on how school, family, neighborhood, and peers can influence their cause of

high school dropout.

Resources

Social Capital. Social capital as a concept that facilitates a deeper understanding of what

leads SEAA students to drop out of high school, as social capital plays a large role in academic

completion and is unevenly accessed, particularly by underserved and minority groups like first-

generation children of immigrants. Social capital is defined "by its function. It is not a single

entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure (Coleman, 1988)." Coleman (1988) emphasizes that in order to tap into these resources, one must establish trust and reciprocity within a network of relationships. He includes normative structures found in family, neighborhood, and organizations as elements of social capital. In families, Coleman (1988) suggests that there is no one single entity that completes family background but is composed of financial capital (family's wealth), human capital (parent's educational background), and social capital (amount of time dedicated to children's activities and events). Neighborhoods and schools with "intergenerational closure" can provide parents with an increase in social capital by providing protection, communication, guidance, and the monitoring of one's own children and those that reside in the school and neighborhood. Coleman (1988) concludes that these normative structures and the social capital of each structure can in turn greatly facilitate the school's task of educating children in a safe environment and reduce high school dropout.

Social capital within a family is formed through family background and expectations. Smith et al. (1995) suggest the quality of parents' involvement in their children's lives also influences children's academic success (Israel et al., 2001). A family can influence the degree of social capital. For instance, Coleman believes that children's access to their parents' human capital, an entity of family background, is dependent on the strength of the relationship between parents and children and the presence of the parents. However, Coleman (1988) describes the absence of a parent, or having a working parent/parents outside the home, as a structural deficiency in the family's social capital. His findings suggest that there is an increased risk of

drop out if children are either from a single-parent household, have more than four siblings, have parents with no expectations of college, or have a combination of one or more of these variables.

Coleman (1988) also explores the effect of social capital on schooling outcomes, particularly as they relate to school dropout rates. The research compared students attending public high schools, catholic schools, and private schools. Coleman's findings indicated that students attending public high schools (14.4%) are more likely to drop out than students attending Catholic (3.4%) or other private high schools (11.9%). Furthermore, the research indicated that the educational achievement of students in Catholic schools was not determined by religious affiliation or the degree of religious observance, but suggested the importance of social capital outside the school that can impact educational attainment and high school dropout rates. Building upon Coleman's social capital theory, I will incorporate the normative structures to explain how the accumulation of (or the lack of) social capital within the structures can influence dropout.

Similarly, building on the works of Coleman (1988), Israel et al. (2001) examined how community location and social capital, as well as family social capital, enhances educational achievements. Israel et al. (2001) assessed how "community structural attributes" (e.g., socioeconomic capacity, isolation, instability, and inequality) and "process attributes" (the extent and character of community action and individual relationships among adults and youths) impact educational success. Findings suggest that children who come from a higher socioeconomic status tend to perform academically better. Families with a higher socioeconomic status tend to have higher academic expectations and foster an environment geared toward education. Moreover, the community influences student academic success. Results indicated that students who had less mobility during their academic career, who were engaged in group activities

through the church, and who had parents who were friends with their childhood friends' parents, positively influenced student's composite test scores and academic grades. Findings from the study suggest families and communities must be actively involved and engage with youth to strengthen social capital within the family and community (Israel et al., 2001). In turn, strengthening social capital within normative structures can reduce high school dropout (Coleman, 1988).

Cultural Capital and Habitus. Cultural capital is another concept that facilitates a greater understanding of what leads SEAA students to drop out of high school. Cultural capital, a concept first developed by Pierre Bourdieu, is now a widely used concept in the education field (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). In the field of education, the dominant interpretation of cultural capital can be traced back to the work of Paul DiMaggio (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). According to DiMaggio cultural capital is defined as "instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth social designated as worth of being sought and possessed." Cultural capital can be measured as the attitude (students' interest in art, music, and literature), activities (students created arts, performed, attended arts events, and read), and information (famous composers) (as cited in Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Cultural capital can also be measured by a list of indicators that are based on "highbrow" and "middle brow" cultural activities, such as fine art and classical music (Lareau & Weininger, 2003), which are also known as dominant interpretation or culture. Carter (2003) asserted that there are two forms of cultural capital—"dominant" and "non-dominant" resources—that help facilitate students' ability to maintain valued status positions within their communities. The dominant culture is known to impact the educational system. For example, many schools tailor their curriculum towards the dominant culture (Milner, 2005), and thus incorporate many "highbrow" and "middlebrow" activities. Bourdieu argues that one who is

not born into the dominant culture whose knowledge is deemed valuable; one should be able to access the knowledge through school (as cited in Yosso, 2005). However, to acquire cultural capital, students must learn and adapt to the highbrow culture. Although many schools require that students engage with activities associated with the dominant culture, rarely are students provided with the means to do so; rather, they are expected to already have acquired it from their family, which is in turn based on their socio-economic class (Dumais, 2002). Thus, Bourdieu believes that schools draw unevenly on the social and cultural resources of members of the society (as cited in Lareau, 1987) and reinforces one culture (Durmais, 2002) over others.

Building upon Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, Yosso (2005) provides the framework of "Communities of Color cultural wealth." This framework recognizes the cultural complexities, richness, and uniqueness of culture that non-White communities possess. It is composed of six forms of capital: 1) aspirational capital, referring to the ability to preserve hopes and dreams when encountering adversity; 2) linguistic capital, referring to intellectual and social skills attained through the ability to communicate in more than one language; 3) familial capital, referring to the capital gained and maintained by family members; 4) social capital, referring to the resources of one's network of people and communities; 5) navigational capital, referring to the skills to navigate through social institution; and 6) resistant capital, referring to the knowledge and skills to challenge oppression and inequality. Yosso's (2005) framework is valuable because the cultural capital most desired in U.S. schools is the dominant culture. However, due to the cultural diversity of the student populations in schools, capital among ethnic student populations varies. Thus, one can argue that cultural capital has continuously caused educational performance disparities among minority student populations. When considering

cultural capital in relation to school, it is important to consider another theoretical concept: habitus.

Habitus is defined as "one's view of the world and one's place in it" (Dumis, 2002). It is important to understand how students' values and beliefs fit into (Nora, 2004) and contribute to their navigation through the educational system (Dumis, 2002). As per Dumis (2002), an understanding of students' resources (i.e., capital) and the ways they use them (i.e., habitus) can help educators come to a better understanding of the causes that lead SEAA students to drop out.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to understand how the lack of certain resources can cause high school dropout from SEAA students' perspectives. Findings from this line of understanding can be insightful because they provide a focus on sources that may not have been previously mentioned by other ethnicities as they are unique to SEAA students, thereby ultimately better serving this ethnic population known for high dropout rates.

Theory of Dropout

According to Finn (1989), the process of withdrawal can begin as early as elementary school and the process progresses until the student withdraws completely from school and is supported by several studies. Finn's theory suggested that students' identification with the school was an important factor in sustaining school involvement and that participation in school activities contributed to the identification. Without sustaining an identification with school, this can lead students to drop out. Finn (1989) proposed two models of school withdrawal, frustration self-esteem, and participation identification. Explaining the first model frustration self-esteem, Finn argues that there are three elements that lead to school withdrawal: early school failures, low self-esteem, and problem behaviors. The combination of increasing low self-esteem and

15

problem behavior further erodes school performance until the student either voluntarily quit

school or is forced to drop out due to their problematic behavior

The second model of withdrawal is participation-identification. The model suggests that

students who lack participation in school activities in turn, lead to poor school performance and

to a lack of belonging or identification with school. Participation can include school activities,

non-academic school activities, and school politics. For this model, Finn argues that this model

has two elements - behavioral and emotional- that contribute to students' process of withdrawing

from school.

Another model for the theory of dropout explains that students can experience one of

three types of dropout: push out, pull out, and fallout. Jordan et al. (1994) developed their theory

based on the works of Rumberger (1987), Gambetta (1987), and Wehlage and Rutter (1986),

who stated that students experience either "pull" or "push" effect factors that lead them to leave

school. A student can experience the "push" towards dropping out of school when faced with

adverse situations within the school environment that leads to consequences, such as attendance

and discipline policies, punishment for poor behavior, and academic assessments. A student

experiences the "pull" of dropping out due to the lack of either social or cultural capital

resources, which is closely related to financial worries, employment afterschool, family needs,

family changes such as becoming a parent, and peer influence (Doll, et.al., 2013). Building upon

Jordan et al. 's (1994) work, Watt and Roessingh (1994) added "falling out of school," which

occurs when students lack motivation, are disengaged in school activities and events, or lack the

educational support needed to complete school. Falling out also highlights a condition where the

student gradually increases their decision to drop out without being forced to drop out. Thus,

instead of a clear "push" or "pull" out of school, these students drop out by ultimately

disappearing or falling out of the system.

The current study used a qualitative phenomenological approach. Through qualitative inquiry, participants were given the opportunity to present their stories, have their voices heard, and give meaning to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The approach was used to understand the participants' experiences that led to their decision to drop out of high school as well and to uncover the shared aspects of those experiences.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the consequences of high school dropout, the lack of qualitative data that takes into account students' perspectives, and the lack of studies conducted on SEAA students' need for resources. The literature has consistently reported the need to disaggregate data in order to understand the large disparity that exists among Asian ethnic groups yet not all research and data has done so. This often results in a misperception that all Asians are model minorities. Thus, it becomes all the more crucial to understand from the perspectives of SEAA students' perspective of the factors or influences that cause dropout in order to prevent potential future dropouts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide a literature review on factors that are associated with high school dropout, the background and history of SEAAs in the United States, and how some relevant factors such as intergenerational conflict that exist among different generation, the model minority myth, racism, and critical race theory impact SEAA students' educational attainment.

Factors Associated with High School (HS) Dropout

In an attempt to understand why HS dropout occurs, several studies have been conducted to pinpoint factors or predictors of dropout behaviors (Sum, et al., 2009; Suh & Suh, 2007; Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Alexander, et al., 2001). Their findings suggested the following: First, among the various reasons that lead to a student's decision to drop out of school, students often experience more than one factor that contributes to dropout. Second, dropout is often a process and not an event, suggesting that over time, students come to the decision to drop out, or experience the pull-out or push-out of dropout. Their research conducted student surveys and interviews to understand the causes of dropout from students' perspectives (Behnke, et al., 2010; Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Findings from the studies have revealed four major types of influences that affect students' decisions to drop out: family and parent, peer, neighborhood, and school. Although four major types have been found to be influential, research has shed some light on other possible reasons that cause the act of dropout. Each factor in turn:

Family and Parent Influences

Research has suggested that as early as the first grade of elementary school, parents and changes in family structure have an incredible impact on a student's academic trajectory (Alexander et al., 2001). Findings suggest that family structure, mother's age, family stress, and

maternal employment were shown to enhance or reduce dropout risk. For example, a stable family and high family SES is strongly related to dropout (Alexander et al., 2001). Thus, research has suggested that family are known to exert considerable influences playing a large role in students' academic attainment as well as dropout behavior (Alexander, et al., 2001; Astone & McLanahah, 1994; Afia, et al., 2019; Parr & Bontiz, 2015; Rumberger, et al., 1990). Some key factors that are known to influence a student's academics are their family's socioeconomic status (SES), parental involvement, parenting styles, parental education attainment, as well as family household makeup, and residential mobility. In particular, their research found that a lower SES is associated with higher dropout risk (Alexander et al., 2001; Parr & Bontiz, 2015; Suh & Suh, 2007). In a longitudinal study conducted by Alexander et al. (2001) on students in Baltimore, Maryland, over 40 percent of the students left school at some point without a degree. Among the students who left school with a degree, 60 percent were lower SES youth in the school. The study suggests that family structure, mother's age, family stress and maternal employment influence or reduce dropout risk. Among the factors that were examined SES had the strongest relation to dropout, although family factors such as residing in a single-parent household, having a teenage mother, and being in a family with high levels of stressful change (i.e., death, divorce, family mobility, and financial issues) are also found to elevate the risk of dropping out. In contrast, Rumberger, et al. (1990) suggest that students of high-SES parents are less likely to drop out of school because their parents can support their children in several ways. Rumberger, et al. (1990) note that, in general, high-SES parents are more likely to spend more time with their children than low-SES parents, particularly in activities that increase cognitive development or the formation of human capital. They are also more likely to have appropriate expectations for educational achievements. Furthermore, high-

19

SES parents tend to exhibit parenting styles that foster good communication between parent and child. Other studies have suggested that it is not only the amount of time a parent spends with their child but also how they parent the child (Afia, et al., 2019; Blondal & Adabjamardottir, 2009).

Studies have suggested that parenting styles are equally as important as SES in a student's academic achievement (Alexander, et al, 2002; Afia, et al., 2019; Blondal & Adabjamardottir, 2009). Parental style is a multi-faceted construct that reflects parents' abilities to create an organized environment and a positive and communicative relationship between them and their children (Alexander, et al., 2002). Researchers have found that dropouts tend to have parents with permissive parenting styles which result in an overall lack of communication, supervision (Afia, et al., 2019), and support (Alexander, 2002), leading students to make decisions on their own (Rumberger, et al., 1990) and to an increase in dropouts. For instance, a qualitative observation of parents of dropouts also suggests that these parents are not as skilled compared to parents of graduates in communicating, setting boundaries, and maintaining a positive relationship with their adolescents (Romo & Falbo, 1996). As mentioned before, parenting style is a multi-faceted construct that blends into how much parents are involved in their child's life, including their educational trajectory (Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2009). Studies on the influence of parenting on school outcomes have mainly focused on parental involvement and its relation to academic achievement—in other words, success; few studies observe the influence of parenting on academic failure—i.e., school dropouts (Rumberger, 1995). Research has shown that supportive parental attitudes and involvement are better for children's school completion; 27% of dropouts occur with high parent support versus 56% of dropouts with low parental support (Alexander, et al., 2001).

Englund, et al. (2008) found similar findings, suggesting that parents who had high involvement in middle childhood and more supportive parent-child relationships in early adolescence decrease dropout rates. Some key indicators of parental involvement include contacts between parents and school, parental involvement in school events, parent-child communication about school, parental support with homework, monitoring of progress in school (Alexander et al., 2001; Reschly & Christenson, 2006), and parents' educational aspiration for their child (Blondal & Adlbjarnardottir, 2009). Studies on parental expectations on education found that it differs across racial and ethnic groups (Alexander, et al. 1994; Bingham & Okagaki, 2012), and their expectation correlates with student achievement. Asians, in general, tend to have high expectations for their children (Mau, 1997), and these expectations vary among different Asian ethnic groups; however, all Asian ethnic groups had higher academic expectations for their children than White parents (Goyette & Xie, 1999). Studies have suggested that students whose parents have lower academic expectations tend to have a higher dropout rate (Alexandar, et al., 1994; Rumberger, et al., 1990; Blondal & Adlbjarnardottir, 2009; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). For instance, a study conducted by Bridgeland, et al. (2006) suggested that 48% of parents were not aware of their children's school attendance or grades, with 47% of students stating that their parents' work schedules kept them from keeping up with their school activities. Studies have suggested that students with parents involved in school activities and events are more likely to be academically successful, due to parents' high academic standards and emphasis on the value of education (Wilder, 2014; Jeynes, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001). Findings suggest that if a student receives the parental involvement defined as parental expectation or measure of achievement they need, students are more likely to succeed and stay in school (Wilder,2014; Fan & Chen, 2001). Like many students have expressed, parents' involvement is a critical need for

their academic success, but unlike other students, many SEAA students noted their parents'
limited abilities to provide guidance through the academic system (Chhoun, et al., 2010).

School Influence

The act of dropping out can be viewed as a slow process of gradual disengagement in
school (Nariz-Wilth & Fieldman, 2017; Bridgeland, 2010; Bridgeland et al., 2009; Cristle, et al.,
2007). Research has suggested that factors such as students' connectedness to school through
extracurricular activities (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; McNeal, 1995), school agents (Rumberger,
1987; Rumberger, 1995; Nairz-Wilth & Fieldman, 2017), school climate (Freiberg, 2005; Kasen,
et al., 2009; Duckenfield & Reynolds, 2013), a school's disciplinary actions (Bowditch, 1993;
(Skiba, et al., 2002), and a school's promoting power (Balfanz, & Legters. 2004) can influence
students' decisions to drop out. School's promoting power compares the number of seniors in a
high school to the number of freshmen and essentially tells people how successful students are in
making it from freshmen year to senior year (Balfanz, 2007). Promoting power is a good
indicator of dropout rates because a school with more freshmen than seniors is a sign that
students are not succeeding and ultimately dropping out of high school (Balfanz, 2007).
Although these are general findings, as mentioned above few studies have been conducted on the
impact of school influences that include students of ethnic group perspectives, and/or on
disaggregated data of an ethnic group with significant high school dropout rates, such as SEAAs.

Research has suggested that students who are actively involved in school activities are
less likely to drop out of school. Mahoney and Cairns (1997) studied students who are at the
highest risk of dropping out, and how their level of connectedness to their school environment
influences early school dropout. Their findings indicated that students who are involved in the
school's extra-curricular activities have lower rates of early school dropouts in both boys and

girls. Similarly, McNeal's (1995) findings indicated that students who are actively involved in certain extracurricular activities, such as sports and fine arts, significantly reduce their likelihood of dropping out. Although extracurricular activities positively influence students' academic success, researchers suggest that students' other positive connections with the school act as additional protective factors against dropout (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). These can include school agents and their resources.

School agents such as teachers and school counselors are found to be a significant influence on a student's academic resources. Teranishi (2002) suggested that the role of teachers is to instill the knowledge and resources needed for many students to complete high school requirements. Other research has reiterated that the positive relationship between school agents and students' connectedness to their school has been found to decrease their likelihood of dropout (Stanton-Salazar et al., 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 2011; Davis & Dupper, 2004). Stanton-Salazar (2011) elaborates on the concept of institutional agents' role in providing key differential resources and support (i.e., social capital) to working-class minority youth. Institutional or school agents are agents who occupy relatively high-status positions. Such agents can transmit or negotiate the transmission of valued resources (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). However, school agents tend to be selective about students who receive resources and knowledge by exerting their institutional power (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009), withholding information from certain students whom they deem as failures (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

In a study conducted by Bridgeland et al. (2009), seventy-five percent of teachers and sixty-six percent of principals did not believe students at-risk of dropping out would work harder if more was demanded of them, they had a higher expectation for them or extra support such as homework assistance. However, in the perspectives of dropout students, the key influences in

23

their decision to drop out were a) boredom or lack of interest in courses (Bridgeland et al., 2010), b) the low expectation teachers had for them (Bridgeland et al., 2009), and c) lack of support and hopelessness (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). Dropouts suggested that teachers needed to keep class interesting, to have more personal instruction, and to know their names (Bridgeland et al., 2010; Bridgeland et al., 2006). Furthermore, they wanted to be challenged and motivated to work harder (Bridgeland et al., 2010; Bridgeland et al., 2006).

Teachers, however, did not see boredom being a key factor in dropout, but the root cause was students being academically unprepared for high school as the factor (Bridgeland, et al., 2009). More disturbing is the fact that only 13% of teachers took responsibility for dropout occurrences, and instead blamed parents' lack of involvement, the school system, elected officials, and the federal government for the high dropout rates. Through educational neglect, social and intellectual alienation (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009), and low expectations (Nairz-Wilth & Fieldman, 2017), school agents can contribute to the continual dropout occurrences of students.

School agents, however, are not the only school factor that influences dropout behaviors. Over the decades, the school climate has been studied in its relation to dropout rates. Kasen et al. (2009) referred to the school climate as the quality and character of school life that is based on personal experiences and the organization of teachers, and a school's culture. Researchers who examine school climate are in general agreement that there is a positive correlation between school climate and student achievement. Educational researchers and policymakers have long been interested in the effects of school climate on students' academic achievement outcomes, specifically GPA. Students who feel more connected to the school were found to be less

depressed, more actively engaged in school activities, more likely to perform better academically, and to be less likely to do drugs and alcohol (Konold & Cornell, 2015).

Other researchers have also suggested that a positive school climate goes beyond student achievement outcomes, including affecting students' self-esteem (Kasen, et al., 2009) and positive behavior and mental health (Thapa, et al., 2013). In contrast, a negative school climate is known to exacerbate school violence, harmful behaviors, and decrease academic achievement (Koscriw, et al., 2013). School violence can be defined as a "multifaceted construct that involves both criminal acts and aggression in schools that inhibit development and learning, as well as harm the school's climate." (Furlong & Morrison, 2000). A negative school climate can be created by continual school violence, bullying and harassment by peers, and unsafe learning environments (Koscriw, et al., 2013; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Everett & Price, 1995).

Everett and Price (1995) conducted a study to understand students' perception of violence within public schools. According to their findings, one in four students experienced violence at school or around the school, and 14% feared for their safety while attending school. Moreover, one in four students believed that school agents' efforts to address school violence were inadequate. This leads to students' inability to feel safe at school, resulting in them sometimes taking measures and devoting time and energy to protect themselves from violence (Furlong & Morrison, 2000). Countermeasures like these affect the victims as well as the perpetrators. Students who take measures to protect themselves often receive more disciplinary action in school, which leads to several negative outcomes for students such as expulsion, detention, and absenteeism (Furlong & Morrison, 2000).

Severe disciplinary actions are found to lead to higher rates of being pushed out of school or leaving school, grade retention, or incarceration (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Disproportionate

disciplinary actions also harm the students' well-being, life outlook, and economic consequences. Studies on disciplinary actions have resulted in an overrepresentation of low-income status students receiving disciplinary actions. The disproportional rate of disciplinary actions between the high- and low-income students is apparent, even in the eyes of students. In a qualitative study, Brantlinger (1991) interviewed students from both income levels. Studies suggest that low-income students were unfairly targeted by school disciplinary sanctions and with more severity. Institutions have argued that using disciplinary actions is a way to deter disruptive behaviors, yet there is no systematic evidence that supports this claim (Shollenberger, 2015). With the understanding of the negative consequences of disciplinary actions and the limited evidence that disciplinary action deters disruptive behavior, it begs the question if extreme disciplinary actions such as expulsion or suspension are necessary.

Among the racial-ethnic groups, African American students were found to have the highest suspension rate compared to Whites, suggesting that race may be a factor in school disciplinary actions (Bowditch, 1993; Shollenberger, 2015; Skiba et al., 2002). However, according to Bowditch (1993), when a student's past disciplinary and academic records and demeanor were taken into account, neither race nor socioeconomic status explained the type of disciplinary action taken by school officials (Bowditch, 1993; Skiba, et al., 2002).

Research has suggested that the school's promoting power can influence the likelihood of a student dropping out of school (Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS), 2007). Studies have found that in general, minority students identified as low-SES tend to live in a neighborhood that feeds into a low-promoting school. Many of these low-promoting schools are known as "dropout factories" (CSOS, 2007). Once this sobriquet is attached, the school becomes known as one of the under-resourced and over-challenged schools where many teachers are

overburdened and overwhelmed. In the U.S., there are roughly 1642 high schools known as "weak or low promoting schools." Of the low promoting high schools, an estimated 48.4% of the student body are dropouts (CSOS, 2007). Unfortunately, many low-income SEAA attend these low-performing schools and often face similar challenges as other ethnic groups in finding resources and having supportive school agents. By understanding the challenges and types of resources SEAA students need, policymakers can address the first step towards equity for this population of students. Thus, one purpose of this study is to understand if school agents, environment, and/or policies influenced their decision to drop out of school.

Peers

Peer influence has been known to impact students' academic trajectory and success. As students transition from middle to high school, students' reliance on adults for social needs decreases, and peer influence increases (Wang & Dishion, 2012). Students, in general, want to emulate the attitudes and behaviors of their friends. This emulation can lead to negative or positive outcomes (Mora & Orepoulos, 2011; Brunello, et al., 2010). Positive peer relationships can promote psychological and life skills as well as support and motivate students academically (Caldas & Bankston, 1997). However, negative peer influences can be detrimental in terms of factors such as processes of disengagement in school, problem behaviors (Wang & Fredrick, 2014), and a lack of sense of belonging (Newman, et al., 2007). Students who struggle with peer acceptance (Staff & Kreager, 2008; Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997; Kaplan, et al., 1997; French & Conrad, 2001) and are associated with deviant friends (Lessard et al., 2008; Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Mora & Orepoulos, 2011; Farmer et al., 2003; Kaplan, et al., 1997) tend to struggle in school and are at a higher risk of dropping out of school (Ellenbogen & Chamberland,

1997). Moreover, the association of peers can also differ among ethnic groups, especially among Asian ethnic groups that have cultural and traditional differences.

The influence of a student's peer group is particularly salient when observing how students begin to discover themselves and construct their identities. For example, Flores-Gonzalez (2002) elaborates on adolescents developing self-identity through the role identity theory. The theory states that adolescents have several identities: school, home, and community. If the adolescents' identities are school-oriented, the adolescent will develop a school-kid identity. However, if students develop a street-kid identity, they have a greater chance of dropping out of school. Flores-Gonzalez (2002) suggested that school-kids often face the pressures and hostilities of their street-kid peers. Flores-Gonzalez (2002) suggested that students must overcome the pressure of their street-kid peers to have a clear school-kid identity. To build a school-kids-identity reputation, they must continuously participate in school activities and clubs and focus on obtaining good grades. School-kids are also known to have other school-oriented peers who accept and motivate them to stay in school.

In some cases, students who seek to belong and be accepted by peers (Caldas & Bankston, 1997) find themselves sharing beliefs and sometimes emulating peers' behaviors, such as aggression (Dodge et al., 2007). Dodge et al. (2007) found that students' aggression levels in the classroom may increase a student's tendency to become aggressive and to value aggression. In some cases, the longing to gain peer acceptance has led some students to act with aggression or engage in problem behaviors to establish their place in school (Lessard et al., 2008). Students with elevated aggression levels or affiliations with high-aggression groups are known to have an increased risk of dropout (Farmer, et al., 2003). For instance, Staff and Kreager (2008) found that boys from lower-class families often find themselves unprepared to compete in a school system

tailored towards middle-class families. This frustration and feeling of academic failure motivated lower-class boys to join subcultures or deviant peer groups that embrace and reward violence and aggression. Although gender-specific research is not within the bounds of this study, this research is important as it shows how the lack of certain social capital and cultural capital contributes to acceptance by certain deviant peer groups, and potentially leads to dropout. Deviant peers tend to elicit negative behaviors such as truancy, devaluing of academic achievement (Wang & Fredrick, 2013), and antisocial behaviors (Wang & Dishion, 2012; French & Conard, 2001). Research has suggested that students often seek approval from friends with similar status (Juvonen & Weiner, 1993). Thus, students at risk of dropping out tend to have more dropout friends, more working friends, and fewer school friends (Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997).

Deviant peers are not the only type of peer group that can influence a student's decision to drop out of school. Research has suggested the peers' SES can contribute to a student's academic trajectory (Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Gonzales, et al., 1996). As noted above, students from low SES often face disadvantages (limited resources & financial constraints) and are constrained by economic factors to public schools known for high dropout rates and low school performances, as well as attended by other disadvantaged students based on what neighborhood they can afford (Abbott, et al., 2000). For instance, the research found that students from a low-SES background attending a school with a population with the same disadvantages and social capital do not benefit from the shared experience (Caldas & Bankston, 1997). In contrast, students from low-SES backgrounds who attend a school with peers from high-SES backgrounds positively raised their academic achievement and thus lowered the chances of dropout (Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Vartanian & Gleason, 1999). However, researchers questioned the findings and

29

suggested that there may be a variety of mechanisms (parental involvement, school environment and agents, and neighborhood) that can either negatively or positively influence a student's academic achievement. Although much research has focused on the effects of peer pressure and its influence on dropout, few have included SEAAs and how peers can affect their school experiences.

Neighborhood

Neighborhoods are known to serve as an important social context for children and adolescents because they provide access to resources, opportunities, and interactions that influence their academic achievement (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Characteristics of the neighborhood such as wealth (Anderson, et al., 2014; Dupere, et al., 2010; Leventhal et al., 2009; Dyson, et al., 2003; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), and violence and crime rates (Burdick-Will, 2018; Milam, et al., 2010) have been found to significantly affect students' academic trajectory. Findings suggest that families may respond to a given set of neighborhood conditions differently (Harding, et al., 2010). Others have suggested that certain groups such as disadvantaged blacks are more likely to be affected by neighborhoods while other groups (whites) are less likely to be impacted (Vartainian & Gleason, 1999). Vartainian and Gleason (1999) indicated that black youth growing up in wealthier neighborhoods, two-parent households, and greater professional and worker neighbors are less likely to drop out of high school.

On a similar note, research has also suggested that students who live in more affluent neighborhoods are likely to have access to resources such as extracurricular activities (Lareau, 2003), have a high cognitive ability (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), do well in school (Keegan & Eamon, 2004), complete high school (Mayer & Jencks, 1989) and, in some cases,

continue to attend and graduate from college (Vartainian & Gleason, 1999); these students are also less likely to get into trouble (Mayer & Jencks, 1989). Thus this suggests that students from a certain background can potentially benefit more from the neighborhood resources. As many Southeast Asian populations are found to reside in less-affluent neighborhoods (SEARC, 2020), further research should be conducted to more targeted data to understand the academic disagreement on the direct impact of the neighborhood on a student's academic achievement.

Other studies on the effect of neighborhoods on academic achievement have suggested that the more important predictor is family poverty (Milam, et al., 2010; Dyson, et al., 2003). Family poverty is made more noticeable within neighborhoods with a concentration of low-income families (Dyson, et al., 2003). Students who tend to live in poverty are less likely to reside in a high-quality neighborhood and be cognitively stimulated at home (Ferguson, et al., 2007). Moreover, young people who live in a high-poverty neighborhood are more likely to be susceptible to negative effects, such as low educational attainment and high unemployment rates of the neighborhood (Vartainian & Gleason, 1999).

This circumstance is defined by the concept of social isolation theory. Socially isolated neighborhoods suffer from a deficit of effective community norms, which reinforces steady employment, education, and family stability (Rankin & Quane, 2000). This theory suggests that young people who live in poor neighborhoods are more likely to drop out of high school or college (Vartainian & Gleason, 1999). For instance, Wilson (2012), indicated that living in a socially isolated neighborhood can have a negative impact on educational attainment. He suggests that young people without family support to overcome the negative effects of this impact are more likely to be susceptible to negative influences from the neighborhood, such as high crime and violence rates (Wilson, 2012) and adult role models (Vartainian & Gleason,

31

1999). Adult role models within a poor neighborhood tend to be individuals who are unemployed and live in poverty, suggesting and reinforcing that the status quo is acceptable. While adult role models influence students' decision to drop out of school, the federal government is also a contributor to the status quo.

At present, the federal government program known as the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) supports the development of affordable rental housing in the United States (Ellen et al., 2015). Each state is allocated credits based on a per capita basis and the credits can be used to support low-income rental developments financed through tax-exempt bonds (Ellen et al., 2015). In all states, the priority is to build housing units in areas with a poverty rate of at least 25 percent or in areas where household income is less than 60 percent of the area median income. In some states, they prioritize tax-credits to development in high-poverty neighborhoods (Ellen et al., 2015. As a result, the government contributes to the cycle of reproduction of low economic class and continuing economic segregation (ProPublica, 2019) by building affordable housing in already low-SES neighborhoods. Given the circumstances, young people living in poor neighborhoods are unfortunately more likely to be drawn into a cycle that reproduces unemployment and poverty, which in turn has a negative impact on their academic performance. As many SEAA students reside in low-SES neighborhoods with high gang violence, racial tension, and schools with low promoting power, the effect of neighborhoods on educational attainment as well as high school dropout should be considered.

Southeast Asian American History and Education

Southeast Asian Immigration – Pre- and Post-1965 Waves

As previously stated, society may view all Asian Americans as model minorities, and indeed aggregated data does show Asians as high achievers. However, disaggregated data reveals

that there is a large disparity in academic achievement within the Asian population. One factor that explains the large disparity in academic achievement is several years of wars and the Cambodian genocide, which denied many SEAs the opportunity to receive an education in their countries of origin. Thus, the legacy of SEA migration under duress to the U.S. may significantly impact SEAA students' academic achievement.

There were two significant waves pertaining to the migration of SEAs to the U.S.. The first wave included the first was recorded in 1952, eight Vietnamese immigrants (Rumbaut, 2000). They were followed by Cambodian and Laotian immigrants in 1953 and 1959, respectively (Rumbaut, 2008). By 1964, there were 603 Vietnamese living in the U.S.: university students, language teachers, and diplomats (Takaki, 1989) that benefited from their relatively high educational and professional experience in comparison to immigrants from subsequent waves (Kula & Paik, 2016; Rumbaut, 2008).

Around 1975, there was a noticeable increase in immigration from Vietnam. The first wave post-1965 were refugees who fled chaos in their homeland from the Vietnam War (Takaki, 1989). They tended to be more educated than other post-1965 groups, with almost two-thirds of the population able to speak English, emigrating from urban areas with more westernized amenities (Takaki, 1989). After the Indochina War in 1975, the SEA population in the U.S. grew to over 1 million due to the arrival of refugees and immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos (Rumbaut, 2008). Like the first post-1965 wave, the second wave consisted mostly of refugees who were admitted through family reunification, but also less likely to be educated or have relevant job experiences (Rumbaut, 2008; Kula & Paik, 2016).

Their journey to escape their homeland was not easy. Many lives were lost at sea, and for others who lived, they endured traumatic experiences that impacted their ability to adapt to and

adopt U.S. culture (Takaki, 1989; Rumbaut, 2008). To some extent, some experiences led to serious mental and physical health challenges, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bankston, 2009). For example, Vietnamese immigrants frequently reported mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic illness (Dinh, et al., 1994).

The third wave began around 1979 and lasted through the rest of the 1980s, as a last-ditch effort by the U.S. government to bring over the remaining victims of the Vietnam War. This population was granted immigrant status—as opposed to refugee status—and also had a slight advantage in terms of settling due to established ethnic enclaves in the U.S. (Kula & Paik, 2016). Refugees that arrived in 1975 dispersed across all 50 states, with a large portion living in California. The proportion of the SEA population in California doubled, with the highest concentrations of SEAs in Los Angeles County, San Diego County, Fresno County, and Orange County (Rumbaut, 2008).

In general, most refugees and immigrant children with families found themselves in low SES segments of inner-urban cities with high rates of poverty (Zhou, 1999). The high concentration of poverty was compounded by a significant decline in industrial jobs, which reduced the demand for low-skilled positions (Zhou, 1999). Thus, these cities contributed to the barriers that immigrants and refugees and their children faced in gaining more human and social capital (Zhou, 1999). Although the refugees and some immigrants share a common history and experience, they differ from each other in fundamental ways (Rumbaut, 2008).

Intergenerational Conflict

Asian American families are often confronted with many adversities in the process of migration and adaptation (Dinh, et al., 1994; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008). Many families cope with the most immediate barriers, such as language and cultural adjustments, and the

acculturation process differs depending on the depth of their exposure to mainstream American culture (Rick & Forward, 1992). Within these families, children often find themselves conflicted and challenged in negotiating between their foreign-born parents' traditional values and views and aspects of Western culture (Ying et al., 1999), leading to potential intergenerational conflict.

Intergenerational conflict is interpersonal friction resulting from the divergence in values or/and viewpoints between two different generations (i.e., youth and adults) (Chung, 2001). Findings from studies suggest that refugee children often adopt host country views and values more quickly than their parents (Rick & Forward, 1992; Dinh, et al., 1994), and is dependent on the number of years spent in the U.S.. Moreover, the rate of acculturation (assessed by measuring identity, friendships, behavior, generation, attitude, and language), often leads to a gradual divergence of perspectives, with subsequent impact on intergenerational conflict (Chung, 2001). For instance, children who view themselves as more educated, as fluent in English, and as more equipped to cope with new situations, tend to dispute the traditional authority (Rick & Forward, 1992). On the other hand, parents often acculturate slower and rely on their children to become cultural brokers thus creating a challenge in traditional roles within the family where parents are normally the brokers for children instead (Chung, 2001). Because of dissonant acculturation (discrepant family cultural orientations) (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996) and endorsement of an assimilation strategy of acculturation (valuing dominant mainstream culture over the culture of origin) (Frazer et al., 2017), this leads to many immigrant parents becoming more rigid and trying to adhere to traditional values at a time when their values are being challenged by comparison to the mainstream culture (Chung, 2001; Ying et al., 1999; Dinh, et al., 1994), causing an increase in parent-child conflict.

Immigration to a very different country can have long-term effects not only on family relationships but also on individual self-perceptions. Because of stresses on family relationships, psychological problems, including anxiety and depression, can develop over time (Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008). For instance, Ying and Han (2007) found that intergenerational conflict has a direct effect on symptoms of depression, more so for girls than boys.

In terms of this research, the point is that an increase in anxiety and depression can inhibit the educational success of students. As families are known to build the foundations of children's discovery of who they are and contribute to their educational success, few studies have investigated the intergenerational challenges of Asian American families, and how this applies to the educational process of their children. Specifically, how intergenerational conflict or differences can lead to children's decisions to drop out of high school.

Southeast Asian Americans Ethnic Groups

Cambodians. Roughly 300,000 Cambodian Americans are residing in the U.S.. Although research on Cambodian Americans has increased, it remains limited compared to studies of other Asian American populations (McCabe & Dinh, 2018). A majority of Cambodian youths attend high-poverty schools in urban communities (Chhoun & Hudley, 2008), are more likely to grow up in single-parent households (Chhoun, et al., 2010), and are more likely to be exposed to gang-related violence (Ho, 2008). Furthermore, Cambodians have the highest dropout rates in comparison to other SEAA groups (e.g., Vietnamese and Hmong). Cambodian Americans are perceived as 1) not in need of academic support due to aggregated data, and 2) culturally deficient and lazy (Chhoun & Hudley, 2008).

According to Chhoun, et al. (2010), Cambodians are low achievers, with 53% earning less than a high school education and only 6.9% with a 4-year college degree. Studies on

Cambodians and academic achievement have suggested several reasons why. As mentioned previously, a majority of Cambodians first came to America as refugees. Before becoming refugees, many Cambodians had limited access to education due to the Cambodian genocide. As a result, many Cambodian refugee parents lack a strong educational background and literacy skills; accordingly, they could not offer their children advice on education (Uy, 2015; Chhoun, et al., 2010).

Tang & Kao (2012) have suggested the experience of the genocide was highly traumatic, making refugees' adjustment much more challenging (Ho, 2008), possibly leading to difficulty assimilating into American society. To further complicate matters, Ngo (2006) suggests that Cambodian American youths face family conflicts that lead to youths' under-achievement, higher dropout rates, and lower test scores in comparison to other SEAA groups (e.g., Vietnamese and Hmong). Though Cambodians are known to struggle academically, successful Cambodian youths credit part of their success in academics to their familial obligations, such as supporting their parents and "saving face," which encourages students to do well in school and persist through college for academic success (Chhoun, et al., 2010).

Hmong. Similar to Cambodians, many Hmong resettled in the U.S. following the Laotian Civil War and during the Vietnam War (Timm, 1994, Lee, 1997; Vang & Flores, 1999). There are roughly 260,073 Hmong living in the U.S., with the largest concentration of Hmong located in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (U.S. Census, 2010). In the U.S., Hmong are perceived to experience inter-generational conflict, truancy, high dropout rates, delinquency, and gender divisions (Ngo, 2006).

Research has concluded that the cultural beliefs of Hmong have a strong influence on the success of Hmong students. The educational belief of Hmong is that getting a good education

will help their children attain personal success and live a good life (Timm, 1994). Within a Hmong household, heavier pressure is placed on males to do well in school, as they are perceived traditionally as the sole provider in the family. For Hmong females, the cultural belief is that their primary goal is to get married at a young age and start a family (Lee, 1997; Timm, 1994; Vang & Flores, 1999; Lee, 2001). This cultural value placed on females hindered many females from graduating from high school and attending higher education. Females who follow cultural values were more likely to win community approval by moving into valued gender roles (Lee, 1997). This value sometimes forces Hmong youths to choose between family responsibility and education, thus creating intergenerational conflicts (Lee, 2001). Moreover, Rumbaut and Ima (1987) suggested that traditional Hmong feared female's assimilation in the dominant culture results in a loss of the traditional values of Hmong. An in-depth interview with Hmong women who are successful academically found that women perceive Hmong to be in a process of change and see themselves as the center of that change. They believe that they are less traditional but not less Hmong than their elders (Lee, 1997).

Laotian. Very few educational studies have been conducted on Laotians. Currently, roughly 232,000 Laotians are living within the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2017) with the majority living in northern California. Findings suggest that Laotians' experiences are similar to that of Cambodians, in that a majority of Laotians first arrived in the U.S. as refugees and had limited formal schooling (Rumbaut, 2000). As a result, many children lacked educational guidance and suffered academically. Despite the initial challenges, many Laotians have assimilated into American culture and can overcome academic barriers. Most Laotians attribute their success in school to the growing support of Laotian Student Associations on college

campuses (Asian-Nation, 2003). The lack of research on Laotians sheds light on the need for more studies on the challenges and successes of Laotians in education.

Vietnamese. Compared to other SEAA populations, Vietnamese Americans are known to be more successful. However, Vietnamese youth are pushed into gangs and are subjected to the same exposure to gang violence as other SEAA groups (Ngo, 2006; Ho, 2008). Although Vietnamese Americans struggle with gang-related issues, they are more likely to graduate high school and attend college (Uy, 2015). For example, 1 in 2 Vietnamese students will attend college versus 1 in 6 for Cambodian, Hmong, or Laotian students (Uy, 2015). Uy (2009) examined dropout for Chinese and Vietnamese high school students and found that when controlling for SES, low-income Vietnamese students are more likely to graduate on time (i.e., within four years) compared to low-income Chinese students. Brankston, et al. (1997) suggest that may be attributed to social relations geared toward adaptation and upward mobility among members of Vietnamese Americans as an ethnic group. Even then, in comparison to other Asian American populations, they are still seen as a group that struggles with gang-related issues and low achievement.

SEAA ethnic groups can be seen as a unique group of Asian American immigrants due to their history and experiences as post-war refugees. Therefore, their challenges might be factored into any discussion which seeks to support these families and children, particularly in the context of understanding and navigating the U.S. institutional system to prevent dropout. Furthermore, when considering the three Indochinese countries—Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam—the U.S. Census recognizes four distinct ethnic groups within, Vietnamese, Cambodian (Khmer), Laotian, and Hmong (Kula & Paik, 2016). However, because much research aggregates Asian American populations into one category (Uy, 2009), this leads to a false conclusion that all "Asian

39

Americans" are model minorities (Osajima, 1988).

Asian American: The Model Minority?

The model minority stereotypical phrase started around the 1960s when the first articles proclaiming Asian Americans as the "successful" minority appeared in newspapers (Osajima, 1988). It was an attempt to send certain ethnic groups a political message that America is not a society with endemic racism embedded within its social structures, and that with hard work and similar values you, too, can be successful like any other American (Osajima, 1988; Chou & Feagin, 2015). These articles argued that Asian immigrants are more successful in school because of a longer school year in Asian countries (Osajima, 1988); also that Asian students have a better work ethic, which contributes to their overall high achievement in school (Osajima, 1988).

In an attempt to understand differential achievement among minority groups, researchers pointed to how the historical experiences, identity, and perception of opportunities affected the students. Ogbu distinguishes two forms of minority groups: "voluntary" and "involuntary" (as cited in Lee, 1994). Ogbu suggests that "voluntary minority groups" do well in school because they see it as a necessary step to social mobility. On the other hand, "involuntary minority groups" reject the dominant culture, underachieving academically because they see school as a threat to their identities (Lee, 1994). Although Ogbu's framework provides a seminal understanding of the relationship between ethnic-groups' own perceptions of education and school achievement, his framework depicts Asians as a monolithic group, thus inadvertently reinforcing the model minority stereotype (Lee, 1994).

The stereotype was exaggerated to the point where a "myth" about Asians as a group (Takaki, 1989) was created. For instance, Lee (2009; 1994) found that of her Asian American

students surveyed, not one shared the same experience, identity, or perspective; yet all were affected by the stereotype. For decades, school districts categorized all East Asian and SEAA students as "Asian" regardless of pan-ethnic identity, thus erasing any cultural or ethnic differences (Lee, 2009). Furthermore, schools failed to recognize that "Asians" fall under all socioeconomic brackets. This failure resulted in Asian students being excluded from resources (support) that are much needed (Takaki, 1989; Olsen, 1997).

Moreover, teachers and school agents assume that all Asian Americans were high-achieving model minorities—an assumption that negatively impacts students who do not live up to this stereotype (Lee, 2009). For instance, Lee (2009) surveyed a high school with a high proportion of Asian students who are at the top of their rankings. However, even then, one in four students who were ineligible to receive a diploma was Asian (Lee, 2009). This indicates that Asian students also need resources to avoid high school dropouts. Thus, as a result of the "model minority" myth, students are more likely to graduate with rudimentary language skills, to drop out of school, to join gangs, or to find themselves in low-paying occupations (Olsen, 1997).

Asian Americans and other minority groups can also experience another type of racism known as "stereotype threat." Steele and Aronson's work revealed that racial stereotypes are deeply rooted in American society, yet their effects on minorities are misunderstood (Solorzano, et al., 2000). For instance, Cheryan and Bodenhausen (2000) examined Asian American women's performance on a test of quantitative skills and whether there was a correlation between their ethnicity, gender, or individual identity and higher test results. Their findings indicated that the positive stereotype associated with Asians did not improve their performance instead, it disrupted their performance and resulted in students receiving lower scores. From the students' perspective, the disruption stems from the fear of failure and not meeting the

stereotype. This confirms that strong stereotypes will often influence a person to try to meet the expectation (Chou & Feagin, 2015). Thus, there are consequences associated with stereotypes on academic performances.

While the image of high achieving and hardworking has opened opportunities for some Asians (Lee, 2009; Takaki, 1989), these perceptions often have dire consequences on Asian American students (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Lee, 2009). For instance, Chou and Feagin (2015) and Museus and Park (2015) found that Asian American students endured a hostile school environment, is often subjected to racial taunts, slurs, and prejudice and stereotype comments from peers (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Lee, 2009) and campus police (Museus & Park, 2015); yet few research on the consequences for Asians are conducted. Students indicated that these experiences contributed to a climate of fear on campus (Museus & Park, 2015). Other Asian students felt their self-identity was denied and pressured to conform to become a "model minority" (Takaki, 1989; Chou & Feagin, 2015) or to assimilate to dominant racial norms (Museus & Park, 2015). Thus, due to a lack of cultural understanding, the term "model minority" and the accompanying mythos, however positive-sounding, ironically fuels racism, discrimination, and inequality towards Asian Americans in school.

Asian American Students and Systemic Racism

In a highly controversial book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Goldhagen (1996) argued that the massacre of 6 million European Jews is not due to one mad man's quest but to the pervasive sentiments of anti-Semitism that reside in the ideology of German society (as cited in Young, 2011). Due to the society's legalized acceptance of killings based on ethnicity, Goldhagen claimed that "all" German society was responsible for the killings, for they performatively believed that their race was superior to others.

Goldhagen's argument is eerily echoed in U.S. history (Young, 2011). In the U.S., racism is a White-crafted system that stems from our White racist foundations (Chou & Feagin, 2015). The history of racism can be traced back to the creation of the U.S. Constitution, where even though Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers strongly advocated that "all men are created equal," the phrasing exclusively reserved these rights for European male Americans, excluded African Americans and women (Feagin, 2013).

However, discrimination was not only limited to African Americans and women. In the 1800s cheap labor was needed, and the U.S. opened its borders to Asians to work on plantations, railroad constructions, and miners (Takaki, 1989). However, many White Americans attributed declining wages and economic ills to the influx of Asians. Because of the negative association with Asians, in 1882 Congress passed The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Act barred Chinese immigrants from the U.S. and declared Chinese immigrants' ineligible for naturalization. The act was then extended by the Geary Act in 1892. Similar to the Jews in Germany during Hitler's dictatorship, The Geary Act of 1892 required Chinese residents in the U.S. to carry special certificates of residence (National Archives, 2018). Those who were caught not carrying the certificates were sentenced to hard labor and deportation. It was not until 1943 when Chinese immigrants and their American-born families were eligible for citizenship (Takaki, 1989).

The continuing oppressive practices of White Americans created unjust social-economic gains, long-term socioeconomic inequalities, and a rigid color line (Feagin, 2013). Historically, and in the present, systemic or institutional racism is not just racial prejudice or bigotry, but the wide range of White racist dimensions that ultimately impacts all aspects of minorities' lives, including education (Feagin, 2013). Because Asian Americans and other minorities live within a

racialized society, and racialized systems of social institutions distributed various capital advantages to groups along racial lines (Ray, 2019), systemic racism should be considered as an influence on SEAA students' academic success and failures.

Systemic racism often creates four types of alienated social relations: 1) between Whites and people of color, 2) between different racial minorities, 3) within a racial/ethnic group, and 4) within an individual (Chou & Feagin, 2015). Many students are children of immigrants and believe that a college education is their ticket to a better career than their parents'. Thus, many Asians tend to work hard and seek higher education. However, Museus and Park (2015) found that Asian students continuously face racism while attending college. They found five themes of racism: 1) racial isolation and marginalization, 2) the pressure to racially segregate, 3) the pressure to racially assimilate, 4) racial silencing, and 5) racism based on the model minority and foreigner myth.

Furthermore, other racial-ethnic groups saw a rise in Asian enrollment in higher education as competition for limited college spots, leading to anti-Asian sentiments (Takai, 1989). With this, many Asian students often find themselves gravitating towards other Asians due to the alienation of social relations among other racial minorities and Whites (Chou & Feagin, 2015). In addition, many Asian students often find themselves struggling with self-esteem issues, coping with the feeling of isolation (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Museus & Park, 2015) and being invisible among friends, as well as the pressure from teachers to do well academically because of the minority myth (Chou & Feagin, 2015). For instance, an interview conducted by Chou and Feagin with an Asian student discussed the difficulties she had in school due to the minority myth. She reported that she rarely recognized for her participation in extracurricular activities and was invisible and nonexistent to her white peers, but was always recognized for her

academic excellence and at times this brought the unwanted center of attention. (Chou & Feagin, 2015). She continued to discuss how she endured bullying from a white classmate regarding her Asian features, however when she told her teachers her teachers did not resolve the issue and the bullying continued (Chou & Feagin, 2015). Thus, the model minority myth has unnecessary consequences for Asian students. To study more in-depth the intersection between racism and the field of education, scholars have utilized the critical race theory framework.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) initially utilized in legal studies to study how racialized paradigms are embedded within the laws themselves, has been extended to areas such as education (Yosso, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). CRT is an evolving methodological, conceptual, theoretical construct that attempts to challenge and disrupt the traditional notions of fairness, meritocracy, color-blindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities (Teranishi et al., 2009; Buenavista et al., 2009). CRT assumes that the model minority stereotype is the White upper-middle-class's way of controlling the educational system (Buenavista et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT in education focuses on the needs of marginalized minorities and challenges the normative framework that is typically used to identify how different racial groups are unevenly distributed across a particular educational equity issue (Teranishi et al., 2009).

For example, Ladson-Billings (1998) used several areas of education—curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation—as examples of the relationship that can exist between CRT and education. She argued that CRT analyzes the U.S. educational curriculum as a culturally specific artifact that is designed to maintain a White Supremacist culture. By maintaining only one culture's history, other ethnic groups' history is either distorted,

muted, or erased. Thus, minority students are taught they are foreigners in the land they call home. Ladson-Billings (1998) cites the example of African American students. CRT suggests that the current instruction strategies presume that African American students are deficient. Accordingly, the same presumption can be made for Asian American students where instruction strategies presume that Asian students are superior (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In this light, instruction is supposedly made race-neutral, and the failure or success of understanding materials is seen as the students' fault (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus, school officials and their curricula fail to serve a diverse student population and can be seen as a factor in dropout.

Furthermore, CRT argues that inequality in school funding is the function of systemic and structural racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Inequality in school funding can be traced to how states fund schools based on property taxes. Neighborhoods with higher property taxes are typically better-funded than those with lower property taxes, a structural inequality Ladson-Billings (1998) argues that this should be remedied. Thus, CRT critique of education policy and practice provides enhanced tools to examine the educational experiences of Asian American students, and by doing so, encourage students of color to share their school experiences and stories related to campus environments (Teranishi et al., 2009; Buenavista et al., 2009).

Summary

In summary, the literature review recaps ideologies and concepts that contribute to the cause of high school dropout. Four majority themes that are covered extensively in high school dropout research are family, school, neighborhood, and peer influence. However, in addition to summarizing previous research, the literature review covered how it was applicable to SEAAs. Unique themes that were covered as they are related to SEAAs are the influence of racism, model minority myth, and critical race theory. While analyzing data from this study, key gaps

emerged that were not previously addressed in literature on the causes or factors that influence

high school dropout. Such key gaps include intergenerational conflict and racism. These gaps

will be highlighted in chapter 4 and discussed in chapter 5.

The next chapter will dive into and cover the methodology which includes the research

design, context of the study (criteria for participation), interview questions, and data analysis

used for this dissertation. Lastly, I will cover the limitations of the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will present the research design. Next, I will present the context of the study which includes the selection criteria of participants and the participant recruitment process. Then, I will discuss the data collection process and data analysis methodologies employed in this study. Lastly, I will end this chapter with a discussion on the limitations of the research.

Research Design

I used a phenomenological approach to address the research question and sub questions: What are the experiences of Southeast Asian Americans (SEAA) students who withdrew from high school?, How does social capital play a role in helping understand SEAA experiences of withdrawing?, How does cultural capital play a role in helping understand SEAA students' experiences of withdrawing? and, Which type of dropout (pulled out, pushed out, or fallout) do SEAA students experience more?

Phenomenological Study

This study uses a phenomenological approach to understand the factors that cause SEAAs to become high school dropouts. Phenomenology addresses the nuances of everyday experiences and shows a more complete picture of the life of students. The approach is a process of observing and analyzing things in a new way without judgment and bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A phenomenological study allows me as an observer and researcher to explore the lived experiences of SEAA students. Through qualitative inquiry, participants are given the opportunity to present their stories, have their voices heard, and give meaning to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The approach is used to understand the participants' experiences that lead to dropout, as well as to uncover the shared aspects of those experiences (Creswell, 2007). Participants were also invited to review drafts of the transcripts of their conversations for

48

additional clarification before the final report was completed—a process known as member checking.

Context of Study

Section Criteria for Participants

In order to understand the experiences of SEAAs students' that lead to high school dropout, participants had to meet the following specifications: 1) between the ages of 18-30, 2) have not completed general high school (attending or attended an alternative school to complete and receive a GED or high school equivalent qualified for the study), and 3) must be fluent in English.

Participant Recruitment

Purposeful sampling was employed to recruit participants who have experienced the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, snowball sampling (Palinkas, et al., 2015) was used to identify cases of interest by sampling people and program/organization staff members, asking them to recommend the next layer of participants for the study. The initial recruitment efforts were made by sending emails through local organizations such as Khmer Girls in Action (KGA), Lao San Diego, United Cambodian Community, and Lao Hmong Family Association. School Districts and university organizations and professors like Long Beach unified school district, University of California, Riverside Vietnamese student association, a professor from Occidental College, and a professor from the University of California, San Diego. The recruitment email included general information about the study as well as an electronic flyer about the study and contact information. Then I increased my search every 2 weeks to include organizations located in Northern California (i.e., Banteay Srei, Asian prisoner support, and Center for Empowering Refugees) and other states (New York, Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, and

Washington). In total, I contacted 104 organizations and university staff members. Some supportive and encouraging responses can be found in Appendix B. Those interested in participating in the study were asked to contact me directly.

As a result of the recruitment process, 16 prospective people responded to my request to post on their social media or forward my study to people who may qualify. In total, I received 15-17 interested participants, but the final sample for this analysis was: nine participants; four participants were recruits from two organizations; two were snowball recruits; one was from social media; two were from forwarded messages. Among the nine participants, many have cited that the study will help shed light on the issue, while others participated for the incentive. Participants' names have been renamed using pseudonyms and their demographics are presented in Table 1. Other prospective participants who originally agreed to participate and however declined later on stating they were no longer interested or declined to respond to follow-up phone calls, text messages, and emails. The self-identified gender of respondents included five females and four males. Eight participants self-identified as Cambodian, and one identified as Cambodian/Chinese. On average, participants attended high school for 2.5 years with the majority continuing in an alternative school after dropping out of high school. Participants indicated that half of the parents received or attended high school with the exception of one parent who attended up until the 8th grade and two other parents received a higher education degree. Half of the parents' educational history was reported as unknown. Seven of the nine participants indicated that they had siblings who have also dropped out of high school. Three of the participants were the eldest of the siblings. Eight were second-generation (born in the U.S.) and one was "1.5 generation" (immigrated to the U.S. before or at age 15).

There were difficulties recruiting participants for interviews due to the CoVID-19

pandemic. CoVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus in the year 2019-2020. Due to CoVID-19, on March 19, 2020 an Executive Order and Public Health Order directed all Californians to stay home except to go to an essential job or to shop for essential needs. This order was known as the "safer at home." A week before the "safer at home" order was announced, I was scheduled to conduct roughly 6-8 in-person interviews at an organization in the San Francisco Bay Area the following week. When I reached out to the primary contact at the organization, the person stated that many of the participants specifically requested an in-person interview as opposed to an online video platform or phone, and did not feel comfortable having me contact the potential participants personally. According to the primary contact, participants preferred an intimate setting due to the sensitivity of the topic. I was not able to conduct these interviews.

Table 1
Participants' Demographics
(Age range between 18-30)

	Ethnic Identity	Highest Degree Received or Attended-Mother	Highest Degree Received or Attended-Father	Type(s) of HS Attended	Years Attended in Traditional HS	Members of Family Dropped Out
Kevin	Cambodian	HS	Unknown	Traditional/ Alternative	3	All siblings (2 brothers)
Maria	Cambodian	HS	Unknown	Traditional/ Alternative	3	All sibling (1 brother)
Kristi	Cambodian	Unknown	Unknown	Traditional/ Alternative	2.5	All siblings (6)
Samantha	Cambodian	HS	HS	Traditional/ Alternative	.5	All siblings (2 sisters)
Conner	Cambodian	Unknown	Unknown	Traditional/ Alternative	2.5	None
Alex	Cambodian/ Vietnamese	HS	AA	Traditional/ Alternative	3	None
Jason	Cambodian	Unknown	Unknown	Traditional	3.5	All siblings (1 brother/1sister)

Amber	Cambodian	8th grade	11th grade	Traditional/ Alternative	3.5	All siblings (2 brothers)
Troy	Cambodian	HS	BS	Traditional/ Alternative	1	All siblings (2 brothers)

Data Collection

Initial conversations with potential participants took place through email or text messages. Emails and text messages served as a space for informal discussions about the study and the process of participating. Consent forms were emailed and sent back to me. Once a consent form was received, an interview time was negotiated. All data for each interviewee was collected on the day of the interview by one researcher (me) using the semi-structured interview protocol to guide the questioning.

The interviews were all conducted via telephone and recorded using QuickTime and a voice recorder. Both files were saved as an mp4 on the PI's password-protected computer. Interviews lasted anywhere from 16 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes. For the shortest interview (16 minutes), the interviewee did not want to elaborate on the interview question even with probing. In general, his answer was yes or no, and would not go in-depth with questions. Overall, the data collection process took place over 12 months, May 2019 to May 2020.

Interview Questions

To ensure the questions were valid and reliable, I conducted two pilot interviews. Only minor adjustments to the original interview questions became necessary for clarification and simplicity in communicating with participants (see Appendix C). Furthermore, to ensure all respondents were asked the same questions, I used an interview protocol (Cohen et al., 2007). Questions were developed based on the findings of my literature review and their relevance to the two main research questions for this dissertation. The interview questions were then

categorized under two major categories: 1) demographics and background and 2) factors and influences that are related to the cause of dropout. See table 2 for details of how the questions posed correspond with questions about family, school, peers, and neighborhood and research questions.

Table 2
Interview Questions

Family Influence Questions

- What is the highest degree received or grade attended by your mother[1]
- What is the highest degree received or grade attended by your father? [1]
- Do you have any family members who dropped out of school? [1]
- Did any family members influence your decision to drop out of school? (Family members can include any close and distant relatives as well)[1]
- Was your decision to drop out of high school influenced by family situation(s)? [1]
- Do your family values or religion influence your education? [1]
- Was your decision to drop out of high school influenced by anything related to family? [1]

Parental Influence Question

- How did your parents support you academically? [1]
- Did your parents(s) have any expectations for you academically? [1]
- Is there any way your parent(s) could have supported you academically? [2]
- How involved were your parent(s) in school events such as parent conferences and events held by school? [1]

Peer Influence Questions

- Did any of your friends drop out? [1]
- Did you have a social network of friends? [1]
- Were they supportive in your academic decisions? [1]
- Did your friends influence your decision to drop out of school? [1]

School Influence

- Were you involved in any school activities or clubs? [1]
- What did you do afterschool? [1]
- Was there an academic or administrative agent you were close to? [1]

- Did you feel safe in school? [1]

- Did you feel like you were support by the school environment? [1]

- Did the school administrative staff reach out to you to offer academic support? [1]

- What types of resources did they provide or not? [2]

- What type of resources would you have wanted from the school or school agent? [2]

Neighborhood Influence

- Please describe the neighborhood you grew up in? [1]

- How do you think your neighborhood impacted your academic decision(s)? [1]

- How did the people in your neighborhood impacted your academic decision(s)? [1]

Other Relevant Questions

- Which ethnic group do you belong to?

- Which type of high school did you attend?

- How many years have you attended your traditional high school?

- Did you like attending school? [2]

- When did you decide to drop out of high school?

- Were there any life events that influenced your decision to drop out of high school? [1]

Note: [1] Relates to SQ 1 & [2] Relates to SQ 2

The first eight interview questions gathered demographics, individual background, and family background. Such questions revealed their ethnic group, parents' educational attainment, type(s) of high school they attended, any family members or friends who dropped out, and their Socioeconomic status (SES).

The next four questions were related to family influences. These questions are met for the interviewees to reflect on how, if at all, their family influenced their decision to drop out of high school.

The next four questions were related to parental influences, in order to understand how involved the interviewee's parents were in their academic decisions, what type of resources the parents provided if they had any expectations for them academically, and what type of support

the students themselves would have wanted from their parents.

The subsequent three questions were on self-influences, designed to gauge if any personal life events were a factor in their decision to leave or drop out of school. Interviewees were asked to reflect on whether he/she liked attending school, and if not, why not. Interviewees were then asked to describe the period when they decided to drop out.

The last ten questions were about school, peer, and neighborhood influences. These questions were meant for the interviewees to reflect on how these influences, if at all, have an impact on their decision or caused them to leave school. Questions regarding school influences focused on school agents, available resources, school environment, and the interviewee's involvement in school and afterschool programs. Questions on peers were designed to understand the types of friends the interviewee had, and if they provided support or influenced their decision to leave or drop out of school. Lastly, interviewees were asked to describe and reflect on whether their neighborhood impacted their academic trajectory, and if so, how.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed using a transcription service called REV. The transcripts were transcribed verbatim. Once returned, I reviewed the transcripts to ensure their accuracy. I then listened to the audio records and compared them to the transcriptions. Minor changes were made to four of the nine initial REV transcriptions. I reviewed the transcripts once again to clean the data and ensure transcripts are readable. I then reviewed the transcript a second time to divide the data into meaningful sections.

Participants were then emailed the final transcript checked by me as a Word file for member checking. Eight of the nine participants reviewed the data. Two participants made minor changes to the transcripts. These transcribed interviews were then converted to a table format

and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet. Two coding cycles were conducted. For the first cycle, In Vivo Coding was conducted manually for each section.

In Vivo Coding was used as a coding method in this study because it prioritizes and honors the participant's voice (Saldana, 2016). In Vivo Coding also uses words or verbatim short phrases from the participant in the data recorded as codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020). An example section of a transcript using In Vivo Coding is an interview conducted with a participant, Samantha on her perspective and experience on what caused her to drop out of high school.

Transcription Excerpt	Coding Scheme
outside of the confines of my parents' and so, uh, I think the most important factor impacting me dropping out of school was my [1]parents pulling me out but, um, what added to that was, um, that I really wanted to be able to [2]continue my education and so I, um... eventually [3]caused me to move out and then pursue alternative, like, life trajectory to be able to make those decisions and, um... So I would say there, there was a component of me being able to, um, take back agency and [4]control of, um, that situation eventually.	[1] "parents pulling me out" [2] continue my education" [3] "caused me to move out" [4] "control of, um, that situation"

The second cycle used the pattern coding method to establish patterns from the first cycle of coding. Pattern coding is appropriate for this study because it helps in developing major themes from the data and search for causes and explanations in the data (Saldana, 2016). Examples from 2 transcripts are used to show how patterns are established.

Transcription Excerpt	Coding Scheme	Pattern Code
JASON: So I had to hide, I hide in a tree, we cannot eat lunch in our cafeteria we can't do that. We grab our food and go out somewhere. And it, sometimes		

it's like they come and take your food and run away. And you'll still just sit there, and say something to the kid, but they did nothing anymore. And the guy kept doing it over and over. And I think it's [1]racial too, the worse one is the Spanish person and the black person they pick on the [2]Asian, because I live among them. TROY: Um, probably after like start ... um, started getting into [3]fights because of racial, like, they wouldn't like me [4]'cause I'm Asian. And then the, I would go to the principal with my parents, and the principal wouldn't let me transfer schools and things like that, little things.	[1]"racial" [2] "Asian" [3] "fights because of racial" [4]" 'cause I'm Asian"	Pattern Code= Racism

Limitations of This Research

Although this research was carefully prepared, the qualitative research has limitations. Firstly, an effort was made to recruit from all four ethnic groups. However, there was an unequal representation of ethnic groups due to the willingness to participate. Thus, I mostly recruited Khmer/Cambodian participants, with the exception of one participant who identified as Cambodian and Vietnamese. Secondly, although attempts were made to recruit from outside the Southern California region, the majority of the participants were recruited within Southern California with the exception of two participants, one from Northern California and one from Seattle, Washington. Thus, the research is not generalizable outside or within the West Coast region.

Thirdly, due to the nature of the data (qualitative), a certain degree of subjectivity can be

found when analyzing data. In order to overcome this limitation, the following methods to establish trustworthiness were used, 1) member checking, 2) researcher reflectivity, and 3) presenting negative or discrepant information. Member checking is used to "determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate (Creswell, 2014, p.201)." Before sending the participants the final data I reviewed the data for accuracy by comparing the transcript and audio recording and removed filler words for smooth reading. Eight of the nine participants responded to the invite and two made minor changes to the transcript. Researcher reflectivity is when the "researchers reflect about how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during a study" (Creswell, p. 247). Given my own experience of almost dropping out of school and my ethnic identity (Cambodian/Chinese) there is a degree of bias. Because I have a degree of bias I practiced epoche and bracketing throughout the data collection and analysis process. Furthermore, to establish trustworthiness, I presented discrepant information. Discrepant information is defined as "information that runs counter to the themes" (Creswell, p. 202). According to Creswell (2014), "researchers can accomplish this by discussing evidence about a theme. Most evidence will build a case for the theme; researchers can also present information that contradicts the general perspective of the theme. By presenting this contradictory evidence, the account becomes more realistic and more valid" (p.202). Thus when presenting my findings, I indicated if participants had similar experiences or views as well as contradictory experiences or views. Fourthly, due to the nature of the research design, replication of the study is difficult. Thus, any steps that can be replicated will be indicated in the final report. Lastly, due to the non-willingness of potential participants to participate and the

circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a small sample size. Although this study had a small sample size of nine, there is an importance to each of the participants' stories. According to Wolcott (1994), a small sample may benefit qualitative inquiry because it allows the researcher to explore in depth about a phenomenon versus just generalizing the findings when having a large N. Thus, these participants' stories reveal unique factors such as intergenerational conflict and racism that contribute to dropout for a population that is rarely studied.

Positionality: The Chinese-Cambodian-American Researcher
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I am often asked, "Where are you from?" A question that seems innocent and a way of understanding me. This is a question I often find offensive. Why? The answer I often give is never the answer the asker is expecting, "I was born in Denver, Colorado, and raised in Alhambra, California." The questioner proceeds to ask again the question of my emphasis on "where" are you really from?" The bottom line is as a person of color I am often not automatically seen as "American," with the general assumption being that I am from some part of China. Then, even after I answer a question that I believe is incorrect, given that my parents were both born in Cambodia while I was born in America, some proceed to say, "Ni how ma." To me, this is an issue of aggregation, the root of this dissertation. For one, how is it that when I identify myself as "Chinese," people automatically assume I understand and speak Mandarin (i.e, one of several other Asian languages both inside and outside of China) by saying "Ni Hao Ma"? I find this symptomatic of how many Asian ethnic groups are overlooked and seen as one monolithic population.

My background does not conform to the general stereotype (the model minority) of "Asian American." 1) My parents are survivors of the Cambodian genocide and are former

refugees. Both my mother and father had only an elementary-level education and were not given the opportunity to further their education when they arrived in the U.S.; to this day they have never received a high school degree. 2) I personally self-identify as a minority, Cambodian-Chinese, and understand the pressure and stress put on students to be successful, lumped in as part of the "model minority." Because of this, most school agents overlooked my needs for academic resources. The backstory is that my sister and I attended the same school. In comparison to my sister graduating at the top of her class, most school agents believed I would be similar. However, my sister and I were two different people. Since this dark moment of my life, I wondered if I had had someone who cared or had resources to access, would I have struggled so much? As I am in the position to conduct my own

research and answer my own question, I would like to explore this topic with which I resonated.

Due to my lived experience, this largely informs and biases my research agenda. I am personally invested in this particular research topic as an educator and researcher. It is my hope that through my research, 1) I am able to understand myself in a more insightful way and 2) to give voice to the SEAAs' and their experiences that lead to high school dropout.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology used for this dissertation. In summary, I used the phenomenological approach to understand the factors that caused SEAAs to become high school dropouts. I discussed my positionality in conducting this research and how my lived experience biased my research agenda. I also discussed the participant criteria, the recruitment process, and participants' demographics and background. Following the context of the study, I explained how the interviews corresponded to the themes, conceptual framework, and research questions. I also explained my process of data analysis and provided examples of using the

methods in vivo and pattern coding. Lastly, I discussed the limitations of the research. In the next

chapter, I will be discussing the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

In answering the primary research question and sub-questions, What are the experiences of Southeast Asian Americans (SEAA) students who withdrew from high school?, How does social capital play a role in helping understand SEAA experiences' of withdrawing? How does cultural capital play a role in helping understand SEAA students' experiences of withdrawing? Which type of dropout (pulled out, pushed out, or fallout) do SEAA students experience more? The current analysis resulted in the following themes, family and school system with sub themes.

Participant Narratives

The following section is an introduction of each of the participants. Each narrative provides some background into the lives of the participants. This allows readers to get to know the participants.

Kevin

"Kevin" is a Cambodian- American male in his mid to late 20s. He lived in a Southern California, Long beach neighborhood that he describes as "ghetto". He is from a family of five with two older brothers. Both his siblings also dropped out of high school; however, their reasons and causes of dropout differed. The highest degree his mother received was a high school diploma and stated unknown for his father. He attended traditional high school for three years and then attended an alternative school. He indicates that he currently has no job and is making less than $9,999 in income. During his interview, Kevin was really reserved in his answers to the questions and usually kept his answers short. When I probed for more elaboration, frustration could be heard in his voice. Thus, I moved on without pressuring him further. However, he was elaborative when it came to the question of parents' influence. He felt his parents were not supportive and felt some resentment towards his parents.

Maria

"Maria" is a Cambodian-American female in her late 20s. She grew up in Southern California, San Diego neighborhood and is currently residing in the same area with her husband and children. She and her older brother were raised by their single mother. She indicated that her older brother also dropped out of high school. She attended traditional high school for 3 years before dropping out. She described her neighborhood as unsafe. She stated, "sometimes, when I'm looking outside my bedroom window, there was like an alley, and there you can see like fights and couple of times, heard shooting." Although she grew up in this neighborhood, she attended schools in a different neighborhood because her mother believed the neighboring city was more safe with better rating schools. Although she dropped out of school, she eventually returned to an alternative school to receive a high school degree. She currently holds a position and makes at least 75k and above. During her interview, she was candid with her answers and was willing to share her experience without hesitation. Thus, her transcript was rich with information.

Kristi

"Kristi" is a Cambodian-American female in her late 20s. She attended traditional high school for 2.5 years before dropping out of high school. She grew up in the Northern California, Oakland neighborhood and is still currently residing in the city with her family. She described growing up in a neighborhood surrounded by Blacks with few Asians. She and her 6 other siblings were raised by their single mother and she indicated that they struggled financially. She also indicated that all six of her siblings dropped out of high school. She indicated unknown for both her parents' educational history. While attending school, she indicated that her mother was able to provide the essentials and was supportive with providing her with items she needed for

school. Kristi, however, wanted more than the basics and was influenced by her neighbors who she described as "drug dealers." During her interview, she was monotone and answered the questions with short sentences. However, when probed for more explanation she was responsive and elaborated when asked to. Kristi currently is working and makes between $10,000 and $24,999.

Samantha

"Samantha" is a Cambodian-American female in her late 20s. She dropped out of high school in the second semester of her first year. She grew up in a suburb outside of Seattle, Washington. She described her neighborhood as middle to the upper-middle class and predominantly white. She currently still resides somewhere in Washington with her son. She and her two younger sisters were raised by their mother and father. Both younger siblings also dropped out of high school. She eventually returned and attended night school to receive her GED. She indicated that the highest degree or grade attended for both parents was high school. She described her parents held traditional beliefs. She indicated that her father was the head of the household and made most of the decisions in the family. She described her family dynamics as negative, indicating that violence occurred often in the household. This led her to make the decision to move out of the household when she found out she was pregnant. Because she moved out of the household, communication with her family was cut. It took three years after her son was born when communication with her family started again. She stated that she wanted her son to have a relationship with his grandparents. Currently, Samantha holds a position that advocates for justice and rights of the SEAA population. She also currently makes between $25k and $49,999. During her interview, she was chatty and wanted to share her experience. She was not

shy in going into detail about what caused her to drop out of school and was willing to share beyond what the question was asking.

Conner

"Conner" is a Cambodian-American male and is a young adult younger than 20. He attended traditional high school for 2.5 years. He is from a family of four and his parents are currently divorced. He has an older sister who is currently attending higher education. He indicated unknown for both his parents' highest degree obtained or grade attended. He described that his neighborhood had "a lot of gang violence," but it did not impact his educational attainment. He stated, "I don't really think it affected anything, like, the neighborhood I lived in. I feel like I lived in a different neighborhood and if there would've been the same." He described his family, particularly his father and sister as supportive; they encouraged him to continue with alternative education. During his interview, Conner did not elaborate on his answers and stated just the facts about his experience that led to his dropout. He indicated that the general familial situation caused him to drop out of school. Although he dropped out of school, he is hoping to graduate from an alternative school soon and believed that this was more suitable for him.

Alex

"Alex" is a Cambodian/Vietnamese American female and is a young adult younger than 20. She grew up in and currently still living in a suburban neighborhood outside of Los Angeles. She attended traditional high school for 3 years. She is from a family of four. She has an older sister who is currently attending higher education. She indicated that her mother received a high school diploma and her father received an AA degree. Her family comes from a traditional background with high expectations for education. She indicated that her parents

wanted her to receive high marks similar to her sister which led to many arguments with her parents. She also indicated that at an early age she was never a social person and was more reserved compared to her few friends she has. During her interview she was very shy with her answers and sometimes made it difficult to understand her responses, thus a lot of repeating and probing was done. She is currently attending an alternative school to receive her GED and believes that this is the better route for her.

Jason

"Jason" is a Cambodian American and is in his early 30s. He was born and raised in Cambodia until age 10. After his family immigrated to the U.S. his family resided in Southern California in a neighborhood located in Long Beach. He currently still resides in Long Beach with his family and indicates that their neighborhood has gotten better compared to the time when he grew up there. Jason attended traditional high school until his last semester of high school before dropping out. He has 2 siblings, a stepbrother and stepsister, both also dropped out of high school. He indicated unknown for his parents' educational history. He describes the neighborhood he grew up in as the "ghetto neighborhood," where people were selling drugs, moving drugs, and hung out on every street. In general, he described feeling unsafe in his neighborhood and at school. During his interview, Jason was candid in sharing his experience of factors and issues that caused him to drop out of school. At times, Jason's heavy Cambodian accent made it difficult to understand his response, but he was always willing to repeat what he said. Jason reminisced on his enjoyment of school, but his experience with bullying caused him to drop out of school. He discussed how he wishes to return to school, but believes that it is too late for him. He is currently unemployed and is looking for a job.

Amber

"Amber" is a Cambodian American and is in her late 20s. She grew up and still resides in Long Beach, California. She described her neighborhood to be unsafe and full of gang violence. Amber attended on and off traditional high school until her senior year. She later continued adult school to complete her GED. She has one stepbrother and one biological brother, both also dropped out of high school. She indicated that the highest grade attended by her mother was 8th grade and 11th grade for her father. During her interview, Amber was open and candid in her responses to questions. Amber describes the difficulties and challenges she had navigating the educational system, the injustice she felt, and the lack of resources the school had for her to become successful in school. Amber also discussed the challenges she faced at home and how that caused her to ultimately drop out of school. Because of her experience, she currently works in an organization "whose mission is to build a progressive and sustainable Long Beach community that works for gender, racial and economic justice led by Southeast Asian young women." She is currently making between $25k and $49,999.

Troy

"Troy" is a Cambodian American and is in his late 20s. He grew up and still resides in Long Beach, California with his wife. He described his neighborhood as the "ghetto." Troy attended traditional high school for one year before transferring to an alternative school. He has two brothers who also dropped out of high school. He indicated that the highest degree his mother received was high school and a BS for his father. During his interview, Troy was straightforward with his response and willing to elaborate on his response when asked. In general Troy described that he liked school, but racial issues and the lack of help received by school agents caused him to leave school and attend an alternative school instead. Troy did not want to elaborate on his current state of employment nor his income.

Dropout Factors

Family

In this section, participants discussed how aspects of their family influenced their cause of high school dropout. Family aspects included the community the participants and their family resided in, the conflicting values and views between parent and child, and parental situations.

Community. Participants discussed how their neighborhood impacted their education outcomes. In general, participants were split: Some participants believed that the neighborhood did not provide them with a safe place to be academically focused, while some others believe it had no impact on their academic outcome or decisions. One participant, however, lived in a middle-class neighborhood and discussed how her neighborhood positively impacted her academic outcomes. Neighborhood economic status is also a factor, particularly in terms of resources.

Several participants discussed how the neighborhood they resided in and the people living in the neighborhood negatively impacted their academic outcomes. For example, one participant described how people within her neighborhood were selling drugs and making easy money. Due to her family's financial situation, she left school to become a drug dealer. She remarked, "Yeah. I mean everyone was selling drugs. I felt everyone was making good money, so I wanted to be a drug dealer." (Kristi)

Similarly, participants recounted how they were fearful for their lives as they lived in high gang violence neighborhoods, and the fear ultimately impacted their academic abilities. For instance, Maria discussed how even though she lived in an unsafe neighborhood, her mother tried to shield her from the neighborhood violence and people by sending her a school outside the school district. She stated,

[I lived in] San Diego, where there is a large Cambodian community. It's definitely not a safe neighborhood. Sometimes, when I'm looking outside my bedroom window, there was like an alley, and there you can see like fights and couple times, heard shootings. My mom actually had put me in school somewhere further north. She didn't really want me around Cambodian people, so she never... I never went to a neighborhood school. " (Maria)

Although the participant claimed that the neighborhood did not influence her decisions, her statement below suggests that the neighborhood had more of an impact on her academic decision then she indicated: "[the neighborhood people] were like ditching and doing drugs, and, I was doing the same things they did, you know, not going to school, and doing drugs, drinking, and going to parties." (Maria)

Other participants discussed how the fear of survival impacted their academic success:

[I lived in a neighborhood] full of racial tension, couldn't really go outside. Um, you'll be lucky if you had a backyard. That's where you'd hang out at. Um, high rise in gang violence. Um, like I literally almost got shot in the head sitting in, yeah, sitting in the like couch in my house. Um, like there was a drive-by, it went through the window, and then it missed me probably like by, like five, four inches. And then it hit the TV. Yeah, it hit the TV and TV blew up. It was really like every day, there was just like, you couldn't not get ... my brothers got beat up every single day. Um, by rivalry gangs, um, and then my older brother was a gang member, so like he was really respected in the Cambodian community. None of the Cambodians would like mess with us. Um, but then there started to become different Cambodians where it was like Cambodians on Cambodians. But my

mom, yeah, she pretty much picked us up from school at the time because like, it was just like, that was the only way that she can, um, support us during those conditions. (Amber)

Living in a neighborhood with gang violence tends to create fear that can be mentally and physically exhausting, disrupting all aspects of life including the ability to concentrate on academics. For Amber, she alluded to living a life of constant fear of gang violence and how this interfered with her academic life.

Jason also indicated that he believed the neighborhood impacted his education negatively due to bullying that happened outside his house. He stated, "I live in like what some people call a ghetto neighborhood, people were selling drugs, moving drugs, and they kept hanging out everywhere." He indicated he did not feel safe in his neighborhood by stating,

There's no one care nobody. It's all gangster. Like you go the wrong street and stuff they say, "Why you walking this street for? This is my neighborhood." What? No. SO nobody can go nowhere. Then you go another couple blocks, and it's another area and they say, "Hey, get out of my neighborhood. You know, you cannot come here." What? Okay. So I don't go that way no more. When I walk out the house, I get beaten up. People don't like me, I don't know why. They call me names, they start calling you this and that, so yeah, I don't know what to do. And my parents they don't really speak English, they don't, they don't know what to do here. So pretty much, I'm on my own, since [I was] young. (Jason)

The experience that Jason experienced within his neighborhood in combination with his experiences at school (e.g., bullying) created a sense of insecurity for safety

70

within his environment, thus increasing negative symptoms such as stress and depression.

Similarly, Troy discussed how the neighborhood he resided in was a gauntlet of gangs, and walking home from school was a challenge. He remarked, "[There are] a lot of gangs and stuff like that. And it's like people robbing houses nearby. And people having guns and showing it while I walk home from school and things like that." (Troy)

While the majority of the neighborhood impact was negative, there was an exception for one participant, who indicated that, due to the location of the school and the neighborhood, she was provided the resources she needed—such as resources for an unplanned pregnancy, supportive school agents, and afterschool clubs. She described her neighborhood as,

it was, like, mixed-income as in mixed diversity as well, and I think there was a lot of mixed diversity from when I was younger too but the mixed diversity when I was younger was primarily just people of color. There was not too many white families [and] a lot of refugees and immigrants in those communities growing up." She continued to state, "the neighborhood I think definitely helped in the resources and the tools I had to succeed in school so I was able to like, start a club and, be a student leader in our community, just because there was, money at the school and, teachers, and counseling, and counselors that were supportive and, encouraged me to do these things." (Samantha).

Although dropout occurrences can happen in all SES neighborhoods, the findings from this study suggest that schools that serve higher SES neighborhoods provide more resources that help reduce stress and provide options for students while attending school and can potentially help reduce dropout. For instance, as previously mentioned, Samantha had supportive agents who wanted her to continue with school and provided her with options when she found out that she was pregnant. She indicated that she would have stayed in school, if she had the option to

71

stay. However, it was not her choice to drop out of school but her father's.

In conclusion, the neighborhood and the people within the neighborhood can either cause or prevent dropout. Many participants revealed how gang activities and drug dealers negatively shaped their academic outcomes and how they dealt with experience. However, one participant indicated that middle and upper-middle-class neighborhoods can provide the support and resources that are needed to become academically successful. Thus, there is reason to believe that neighborhood people and neighborhood violence and crime as well as resources can influence academic outcomes.

Intergenerational Conflict. When analyzing the data holistically, an interesting theme emerged: intergenerational conflict. Intergenerational conflict is defined as the generational differences in values and rate of acculturation that lead to conflict between parents and youth-adult children (Chung, 2001). As many of the participants had parents who immigrated from another country to the U.S., some participants mentioned having different views and values than their parents. For example, Samantha discussed multiple incidents of clashes between her parents and her on topics such as education and relationships. She stated,

A big [reason why my father wanted me to] disconnect any relationship to my son's father [was] because he's not Cambodian. He's African-American or black and so that was a big taboo in terms of already teen pregnancy and then on top of that, the father or the in-laws that they would be like getting if we continued our relationship was not really my father's preference. (Samantha)

Intergenerational differences exist when one generational acculturate and adopt another culture more so than the other. For Samantha, the difference between her parents and her view can be understood as who she preferred to date versus who her parents wanted. As

previously mentioned, she eventually moved out of the household in order to make her own decisions.

Another example of intergenerational conflict can be seen in Maria's perspectives. She discussed how her mother provided everything she needed for school. However, her mother did not believe in after school events, such as hanging out with friends or extracurricular activities. Because of these strict rules, Maria became rebellious. She remarked,

Yeah, allowing me the freedom to participate in an extracurricular, like sports, she was really strict, so strict as in like I couldn't like go out with my friends. I couldn't even stay after school. Um, and I feel like that kinda made me rebel as I got older into my teenage years, and that kinda contributes to me dropping out because I started doing things I shouldn't be doing. (Maria)

Alex also struggled with intergenerational conflict where Alex's and her parents' viewpoints of educational attainment differed. Her more traditional parents' expectation for educational attainment was set high and Alex struggled to meet their expectation causing her to frequently argue with her parents. She remarked,

the typical, get good grades. I thought it was too much pressure, and also to like by like my older sister. They didn't have any [expectation for her] because she was already like good. I guess. So they just wanted me to be like consistent, I guess. [They wanted me to] go to a good college like my sister, [and] like a higher paying job, like being a doctor. (Alex)

Thus, in both scenarios conflicts arose due to different views and values, causing intergenerational conflict that impacted their educational and life decisions.

73

Parental Influences. In this section, participants were asked to discuss how parental influences impacted their cause of high school dropout. This theme comprises seven elements: parental academic expectations, parental traditional values, parental educational values, parental financial stability, the type of resources parents provided, their overall parental involvement in school events and activities, and parents' marital status. Some participants discussed how unfortunate events that made their parents unable to attend school in their youth influenced their academic trajectory. Others believed their parents' divorce was a major trigger for their dropout. Another participant reported how parental academic expectations and the comparison with other siblings can be overwhelming. An example of how parental traditional views and values can influence and lead to dropout is when Samantha discussed how she was forced to leave school by her father due to an unplanned pregnancy. Samantha was in her sophomore year in high school when she found out she was pregnant. When she told her parents she indicated that her parents wanted the situation to be a "private family matter." In order to "save face," many families tend to handle unplanned pregnancies in private. Thus, because the pregnancy was out of wedlock, Samantha's parents wanted her to have the child in private and out of people's view. Although, in general, parents are known to provide children with guidance and make life decisions with the best intentions. However, their children may not necessarily agree with their parents' decisions. Moreover, due to her age at the time, she also did not fully understand her options or received the proper resources to make a sound decision. She stated,

> I would add another factor, though it wasn't as impactful. Because being a minor and under the guardianship of the care of parents, I didn't really have the agency to fully make those decisions. [Because I wasn't able to make decisions] I eventually moved out from

my parents' household during my pregnancy to raise my son in the manner that I felt was best and could do. (Samantha)

In this scenario, Samantha did not share the same beliefs as her parents that having a child out of wedlock should be a private matter, so she made the decision to leave the household. After three years of being cut off from the family, she started to communicate with her parents again. She remarked:

I think the most important factor impacting me dropping out of school was my parents pulling me out but, what added to that was I really wanted to be able to continue my education and so [it] eventually caused me to move out and then pursue alternative, like life trajectory to be able to make those decisions. …My parents definitively went out of their way because they valued education, to be present and do what was needed of them. … When I was doing night school after I had dropped out of high school and then I got my GED and then I moved and [attended] community college at night school. During school there were times when my parents and my in-laws would watch my son in terms of children, so that was really helpful. So I think that was the biggest contribution both sides of the family gave was watching our son or taking him during the time where we may have needed. (Samantha)

Parents often want to see their children successful in life and would often support in various ways. As Samantha stated in the end, her parents helped her through school by providing her with child care because they believed in the value of education.

Another well-known parental influence that impacts academic outcomes is parents' or family's SES. Kristi was a sophomore when she decided to drop out of high school due to her family's financial situation. She was being raised by a single mother and had six other siblings.

She indicated that her mother provided everything she needed, but what was provided was the bare minimum and she wanted to make money fast. She remarked,

I think around 10th grade. My parents again they didn't have much. Well not my parents, my mom, she was a single mom. She don't have much, we don't have a car. We don't have much growing up. We didn't have a lot of food or a lot of clothing. So I started seeing friends, seeing other people make money. [They were] not working illegally and I started to get interested on how fast money would be able to come in. And that's about it.

In many family situations, money has been the core issue in households, causing students to make hard decisions such as attending school or finding a job to support the household. In Kristi's situation, the temptation of making more money and being able to afford essential items such as food and material goods like clothing outweighed attending school.

Parents' educational values have also been mentioned as an influence of participants' educational decisions. Maria remarked how her mother's value in education influenced her educational attainment. She indicated that her mom came to the United States without the opportunity to re-enter school, because she had to work to support the family. She stated that her mother did not want the same life for her and encouraged her to continue her studies and finish so that she would not endure the same struggles she had. She remarked,

well, my mom, came here, to the country, and she didn't get to go to school, because she had to work to help the family, and she didn't want that for me, so she always encouraged me to finish my education so that I cannot struggle as much as she did. (Maria)

Maria later returned to an alternative school to complete her high school equivalent degree.

Similarly, Amber indicated that it was not necessarily her family that encouraged her to drop out, but parents' situations and challenges. She stated that her mom had high expectations for her to attend and graduate from high school as well as college. She remarked, "My mom wanted me to be a doctor. So did my dad."

In addition, she indicated that both family values and religion influenced her academic decisions. She indicated that her mother wanted her to finish school an opportunity she did not have. She stated,

> my mom definitely encouraged me to go to school because she felt like that works. You know, she didn't have that. She didn't have an education that she wanted. When she was in her homeland, that was interrupted. But she also understood that like, because of the challenges we had at home it wasn't gonna allow me to focus in school. So like that became like finding a way to fill in that like love and that mental resources that I needed outside my family. (Amber)

Amber eventually returned to an alternative school to receive her high school equivalent degree.

Participants also reported their parents' divorce playing a role in their dropout. For instance, a study conducted in Australia found that parental divorce reduces a child's change of completing secondary school (Evans, et al., 2001). Conner remarks that his parents' divorce was the root cause of dropout when he stated,

> My parents divorced [and] to be honest [was] the reason why I got kicked out of public school and moved to continuation school. I just had a lot going on in my life. So I didn't have time to go to school so I would be ditching school a lot. Like I wouldn't be in the mood to go to school. That's kinda the reason why I failed. (Conner)

For Conner, the process of his parents' divorce could have left him feeling overwhelmed and emotionally sensitive, which could have potentially contributed to other life issues and his ability to concentrate in school.

Similarly, Amber discussed how multiple family situations, such as her parents' separation and having to take care of her mother in the hospital during her high school years, led to her dismissal from high school. She indicated that the combination of family situations led to her decision to ditch school, which ultimately led to her being kicked out of school. She remarked,

> [My mother] experienced an accumulation of like PTSD that they were experiencing during, after the war and resettlement and the challenges of resettlement. So she eventually fell into stress and then suffered a heart attack, no, suffered a stroke. And then, um my parents ended up getting separated because they were like constantly arguing all the time. So that played a role in my decision of dropping out of school. (Amber)

While both Conner and Amber stated that parental divorce was the root cause of their dropout, both participants also alluded to other issues that, in combination with parental divorce, forced their hand.

Another participant, Maria, discussed how her mom believed in receiving an education and provided her with words of encouragement. However, her mother's lack of understanding of the importance of extracurricular activities, coupled with stringent house rules, led her to test her boundaries in high school and contributed to her dropping out. She remarked,

> My mom always wanted me to finish high school and then finish college so that I can get a good job. … she did provide me with my own room and supplies…I would have want them (school) to help my mom to realize that, you know, other things are important too,

78

and extracurricular activities are important too. I think it was because my mom was so strict that it as one of the reason why I made the decisions that I did, in high school. (Maria)

Maria is a prime example of how parents can provide everything a child needs, but if parents are not able to understand what really matters to a child, the relationship between parent and child can be negatively impacted to the point of undermining the very thing they are trying to encourage.

Conversely, if parents are known to be permissive, or lack involvement in their children's academic career, this can result in negative consequences as well. For example, Kevin explained that his parents were never involved in his academics and never had any expectations. Thus, he believed that his parents' lack of involvement and expectation was the root of his dropout. He remarks, "They didn't want me to graduate. They didn't want me to finish high school… Cause they think I would fail." (Kevin)

When prompted to elaborate on the topic further, Kevin asked to move on without saying anything more. This could suggest that the topic was still a sensitive one; he possibly still blamed his parents for his failure and would have wanted more support from his parents.

Although participants stated that parental expectation and support or the lack of parental expectation contributed to academic success, others have also indicated that they do not blame their parents for their academic outcome. Some participants believe that it is not the unwillingness to participate in school activities and events, but the lack of knowledge about the academic system, language barriers, and financial situations that prevented their parents' involvement.

Jason recounted that he was not born in the U.S., and that when his parents and he

immigrated to the U.S., his parents lacked the knowledge of how the U.S. functioned. The participant discussed how his parents wanted to help, but couldn't due to language barriers and a lack of understanding of American policies. He remarked,

> My parents were helpful, but she didn't know what to do. When you don't really speak English and you don't know what's going on with United States law and rule…. And only I spoke English at the time. And when I explained to them, they don't understand. I don't blame my parents, because they don't really know how to speak English and stuff like that, I don't really blame her. (Jason)

Jason's family scenario is a typical representation of what many refugee families face when they enter a foreign country. Along with confronting many adversities in the process of migration, many parents are burdened with trying to understand and navigate a foreign educational system. Because the burden to acculturate into a new society is hard enough, many families place the burden of understanding the educational system on their children.

In a similar vein, another participant believed that his academic decision was for him to make, and if he made the wrong decision it was his responsibility. He stated, "I would have wanted them to, but at the same time, like, I never really like wanted them to help me. Cause like it was just all on me." (Conner)

Perhaps what the participant meant to say is that he would have wanted his parents to help him, but due to his parents' divorce he felt his parents were overwhelmed with their problems. Thus he felt obligated to solve his own problems and live with his decisions.

In conclusion, parental influence greatly impacted participants' academic outcomes. Participants discussed how parental expectation and educational values shaped their academic trajectory, with some returning to school to receive their alternative high school degrees. While

for one participant the high expectation was a factor in her cause of dropout. For others, the lack of encouragement and involvement negatively impacted their academic outcomes, resulting in dropout. Although many participants lacked the support they needed from their parents, many participants do not blame their parents' lack of involvement, citing inhibitors such as language barriers and the lack of knowledge of how the educational system functions.

School System

School Influences. Participants discussed how school influences contributed to their academic experiences. School influences included school agents, school climate, and a safe learning environment. Such influences are known to positively impact students, but educational and psychological school agents can become a significant barrier by preventing optimal learning and development. Some participants believed that school agents supported their academic achievement by providing them with academic and life advice, while others believed that school agents negatively impacted their education by not providing them with support and encouragement. Roughly half of the participants believed that their school environment was safe. However, some participants discussed how racial tension contributed to a climate of fear.

Participants were asked to discuss what they did after school. Previous research (cf. Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; McNeal Jr., 1995) has suggested that students who are academically involved in school-related activities like sports and fine arts are less likely to drop out of school. Thus, a question was posed to gain insight into whether participants participated in afterschool activities.

In general, participants indicated that they went home, hung out with friends after school, attempted to participate in clubs and sports teams, or held an afterschool job to occupy their time. Findings suggest that in many cases, students understood the importance of extracurricular

activities. However, due to life situations, participants quit them even before they dropped out of high school. Thus, findings did not confirm that students who are more active in school extracurricular activities are less likely to drop out, but suggest that life situations influence academic outcome more.

For example, when discussing their school experience, participants discussed how they started clubs and joined sports teams. Samantha stated,

> As a student [I was] a leader and starting up clubs, [I was] being active after school, on social media, being involved in extracurricular, and an after school job. We (her son's father) created a YMCA Earth Service Core organization, a club in the school where we could carry education around environmental justice and environmentalism. Samantha also was also on the cross country track team. (Samantha)

Another participant also discussed how he was not active in any school extracurricular activities, but was active in a non-profit organization serving the community needs. He discussed how the organization motivated him to continue with alternative schools. He remarked, "Yeah, Khmer Girls in Action. It motivated me a lot [to] continue going to high school." Khmer Girls in Action is a "community-based organization whose mission is to build a progressive and sustainable Long Beach community that works for gender, racial and economic justice led by Southeast Asian young women" (Khmer Girls In Action, 2020). In this instance, Conner's parents' divorce led to his dropout. Therefore, involvement in afterschool organizations is not a surefire way to prevent dropout.

In some cases, participants join clubs and teams to avoid and prevent bullying. Jason joined the track and volleyball team to avoid going directly home after school. He discussed how he experienced bullying on the school bus and when walking home if he went home at a certain

82

time. Thus he joined sports to occupy his time and avoid the bullies. He remarks, "Yeah, I ran track and played volleyball…Track and volleyball, they helped me out. Because I don't want to go home yet. When I go home [at] 5 o'clock, I'm not scared no more." (Jason)

In Jason's circumstance, extracurricular activities kept him in school and safe from bullies. However, due to the constant bullying during school hours and sometimes after school, he still dropped out of school.

Participants were asked to discuss how safe they felt on school grounds. Participants who did not feel safe indicated that racial tension that exists between their ethnic background and other ethnic groups such as Blacks and Hispanics and being bullied were the causes of insecurities. In some cases, the constant experience of being bullied resulted in participants' decision to drop out of school. This is why school safety should be considered as a contributor to dropout.

While half of the participants felt insecure due to the lack of school safety at school, other participants indicated that they felt safe on campus and even motivated to do well. Roughly half indicated that they felt safe on campus and even motivated to do well. While school safety was a factor in some cases of dropout, participants indicated that generally enjoyed attending school and learning various subjects. However, due to the ineffectiveness of families and of others who should have been there to help, some participants felt insecure and hopeless and overtime they began to resent school agents for the lack of help and indicated this a cause of dropout. As a participant remarked,

I didn't hate school. I just had the problem, I can't go to school because they just beat me up for no reason. I go around, ask for help. They don't know what to do. So I don't know what to do too. I ask a lot of people for help, most of the people I ask,

they don't really speak English. The only one I can ask is my sister, and my sister

kept say to go to the counselor, they help you, this and that, [go to] the principal, or

call the cops. Yeah right, I did all that already, but this is, they still don't stop

hurting me. (Jason)

However, the help offered by his teachers and counselors were not enough to help

him endure abuse. Even when, by the time he decided to drop out of school, school agents

tried to convince him to reconsider, he stated that they did not change his mind:

Yeah, the teacher and the principal, like 3 of my teachers and the principal. And

they came to my house like begging me to go back. But I'm sorry, you know, I don't

hate school, but, in the meantime, when I come home, that's the worst thing I have

to go through. You had to ride on the school bus. And then sometimes, the kids who

go to school with me, they, they bully me. (Jason)

Similarly, another participant indicated that while on school grounds she never felt safe.

She stated, "I felt scared of like, you gotta look behind your shoulders because like you'd get in

trouble and stuff. I felt like I was always gonna get in trouble." (Amber)

For Amber, her fear was not from her peers but from the school agents. In school, where

school personnel should be unbiased and provide students with equal opportunities and

protection, students like Amber can still feel that she was unjustly targeted, creating a sense of a

lack of safety, leading to an unconducive learning environment.

Lastly, one participant indicated that he often dealt with racial tension while

attending school and has resulted in violence. He remarked, "[I was] stabbed by Spanish

kids a couple of times. I would get into fights as in me versus five people. I would come

home with black eyes and stuff like that." (Troy)

Troy discussed how he and his parents reached out to school agents but were not taken seriously, leaving the participant and his parents feeling hopeless in resolving the situation.

When participants were asked if there were resources that could have helped prevent dropout or would have been useful while attending school. Amber and Samantha both indicated some sort of ethnic curriculum would have been beneficial. For instance, Amber stated, "Um, well, um, like I guess like, uh, representation, like highlighting Cambodian communities," and Samantha also stated, "Um, I think what was lacking was, um, resources about, like, my cultural identity." Samantha also indicated that due to limited institutional support and resources, the school lacked translators, which caused her to become a language broker, between her parents and other families and the school. Samantha stated,

> picking me up and attending events because the teacher asked them to, but the wild part is that I did most of the translations to them, interpreting for them, and then also my peers at some point too. By the second grade I think I was already helping to interpret for other families having to translate conferences. …And so that's kind of, the wild part to me is that, like, on top of... I wouldn't say it was, like, a failure on their part or it was, um... It was just the limited institutional support and resources, um, to know what to do with traumatized refugees. And then on top of [that], I think I picked up English a lot faster than maybe my peers did and so that's why I was put into the position of interpreting for other families, and I remember really... feeling really uncomfortable. (Samantha)

Although the majority of the participants indicated they received some support during high school, they stated they would need more resources from school such as money (Kristi), reproductive health care, clinical support, mental health (Amber), counseling for parents (Maria),

85

parental support (Kevin), more academic guidance (Kristi), opportunities for after school internships (Kristi), role models with similar ethnic background (Samantha), translators (Samantha),and cultural identity curriculum (Samantha and Amber).

Racism within the School. Another theme that emerged from the data was how much the issue of race played in participants' decisions to drop out of school. For multiple participants, racial tension led to bullying and fights, and ultimately led them to leave school. This included racial bullying, racial slurs, and racial profiling. The participants discussed experiencing acts of racial hostility in their interactions with peers, and how these incidents contributed to a climate of fear on campus.

For example, when discussing their experience navigating racially hostile environments, participants discussed encountering racial bullying and racial slurs constantly on school grounds and off-campus. He remarked,

Just for no reason. They call you names, call you chink, call you that. But I tell them, "No, I'm Cambodian." And they say, "No, you chink." I'm not chink, I'm not, I'm from Cambodia." They don't know, think all Asian look alike sometimes. They say, "You chink, you Chinese." I say, "I'm not Chinese." But they love to pick on people, I don't know why. They love to pick on us. …I think it's racial too, the worse one is the Spanish person and the black person they pick on the Asian because I live among them. When I go to school and I got beaten [and]they pick on me too. [He stated] "What, really? Because I'm only like, the time I go to school, there's only like six Asian kids. Six." Another example is, " I hide in a tree, we cannot eat lunch in our cafeteria we can't do that. We grab our food and go out somewhere. And it, sometimes it's like they come and take your food and run away. And you'll still just sit there, and say something to the kid,

but they did nothing anymore. And the guy kept doing it over and over. (Jason)

Another participant discussed how he started getting into fights due to racial profiling. He remarked, "Probably after [I] started getting into fights because of race, like they wouldn't like me 'cause I'm Asian. And then I would go to the principal with my parents, and the principal wouldn't let me transfer school and things like that." (Troy)

Amber also discussed how she conducted an interview with the principal of a local school on his viewpoint on the topic, deportation. She felt "disturbed" by the principal's answer when he openly told her that Cambodians should be deported and how she felt at that point she knew school agents rarely cared for her ethnic population. She remarked,

> I was disturbed to hear the principal said that Cambodian people should be
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> deported. When I interviewed him and I talked to him about it, because I did a
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> documentary on deportation as a young person, as a project. He pretty much said,
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> "I don't think people should come here and do the things they do. They should
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> learn how to speak English, and they should live and adapt to the environment
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> and yeah, I think that they should go home, if they committed a crime." He then
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> highlighted around like crimes of poverty, but he didn't, he didn't care. (Amber)

Kristi also alluded that racism exists in schools when she briefly stated that fights do occur over racism. She stated, "We get into fights with other nationalities." Although she mentioned getting into fights over ethnic backgrounds, she never felt it played a role in the cause of her dropout. However, this example serves to show that disruption on school grounds do occur over racism.

While school agents exist within the school grounds to serve and protect students, respondents said they rarely are able to help all students. These incidents of racial bullying and

racial slurs are examples of incidents that go unresolved, resulting in students exiting schools to avoid conflict and violence.

Peer Influence. Participants discussed how peer influence impacted their academic outcomes. Peers are known to be one of the most influential people in a teenager's life. While some peers can positively influence students' academic and life decisions, they can also have a negative impact.

The majority of the participants indicated that their peers were either supportive of their decision to leave school or of their decision to continue at an alternative school, whether they believed it was the right decision or not. For example, Conner discussed how his friends rather see him receiving a degree than none at all. He remarked, "Yeah, but everyone thought it was, like, the best option, like, for me to graduate through. Not through regular high school then I would have not graduate on time." (Conner).

Similarly, Alex discussed that she had a few friends. She described her friends as understanding and supportive of her academic decisions. She stated,

they understood it. they told me that I had other options like going to, hm, like adult school, which, to like finish high school, if I wanted to and, or take the GED and stuff. Like I didn't have to do it traditionally. (Alex)

She also believed that her friends became more supportive after she dropped out of school. She stated, " my friends and I bonded more since, when I stopped going to school. [we] actually like became closer." (Alex) Interviewer indicated that her friends did not influence her decision to drop out of school.

Amber indicated that many of her friends dropped out of school due to challenges that they faced as second generations. During high school she had a boyfriend that also dropped out.

She indicated that she would ditch school and hang out with him and all their friends as a way of coping, finding space and love. She remarked,

I would always ditch to go hang out with him and all of our friends and stuff. But, I think as a young person, that was my, um, that was my like way of coping with finding, um, space and love in areas that I couldn't find in school and in my, my home, um, around academic and success. Like what does that look like? So it was kind of more of like a giving up part, you know? (Amber)

However, she indicated that her friends did not influence her decision to drop out of school. She stated, "No, they didn't influence me. They didn't encourage me. They were rooting for me. Um, but they didn't step in, um, around like my decisions, because they knew my challenges and my barriers. So they were really understanding." (Amber)

Peers can motivate students to stay in school, even when the student herself is disinclined regardless. For instance, one participant, Kristi, discussed how she had a network of friends and how her friends and teachers wanted her to stay and finish high school. However, she wanted to make money to support her family and decided to quit school. She remarked, "Yes, [I had a network of friends] but at the time, my parents were more strict and I didn't really go places. [Not] until I started making more money. That's when I completely stopped caring." (Kristi) indicated that her friends were not supportive of her dropping out of school. She stated, " No they were not. Everyone wanted me to go to school. I didn't really care." She indicated that her friends did not influence her to drop out of school.

On the other hand, some participants discussed how their peers were not supportive or showed no support when the participant needed them to be. For example, one participant reflected how her peers were one of the most influential causes of her dropout:

We would all ditch together. We influenced one another to ditch and drink, do drugs, um,

sneak out… "Yeah, we normally just hang out, like at the park. We drank, and around

that time, that was when I start smoking weed and all that stuff, things that they

introduced me to. " (Maria)

With the increased encouragement to ditch school coupled with her running away from home

and moving in with her boyfriend, she dropped out of school by junior year of high school. In

retrospect, Maria believed if she continued to attend the high school that the majority of friends

attend, her educational path would have been different. She remarked,

so elementary school and middle school, I was doing good, and the people that I was

friends with at the time, they were also doing good, and then, when I got to high school, was

around the same time I was meeting the people in my neighborhood, and that's... that's when

it happened [to go downhill], and yeah, I think that if I weren't to attend a different high

school, um, things could have been different, particularly if I went and followed my middle

school friends that I had known since elementary. If I went to the same high school they did,

I think it would have been different just because they were a good, you know, group of

people, and, I know that if I stayed around them, I probably would have not dropped out.

(Maria)

Another participant, Samantha, discussed how her peers did not discourage her from

attending school, but she did feel the pressure to do activities that were not related to school. She

stated,

The ones I grew up with they weren't against, I guess me going to class but they

definitely had the social pressure to do things that were not school focused. And they didn't

necessarily tell me not to or say it wasn't okay

However, when she became pregnant, she indicated that her friends were not supportive. She remarked,

> I think ultimately that's probably the part where I just didn't receive the support at all from any of my groups of peers, dealing through a teen pregnancy. I think everybody were sympathetic or really cared about me but there weren't any groups that provide me with support that I needed so there was a lot of distance that came from dealing with the pregnancy. (Samantha)

In sum, peers can positively or negatively impact another peer's academic outcome. As several participants can attest, peers can provide support and attempt to encourage their fellow peers into making a different decision (e.g., attending school versus finding a job and attending continuation or adult school). However, as other participants have also stated, peers are fickle; they can encourage a student into doing non-academic activities (e.g., alcohol and drugs) and then cease support at any given moment, negatively impacting their academic and life decisions.

Teachers. Participants also discussed asking school agents for help but never receiving it. For example, Troy stated that he asked school agents for help but was denied. He stated, "I would go to the principal with my parents, and the principal wouldn't let me transfer schools and things like that." He continued to state that the school agents were not responsive to his needs by stating,

> It was mostly like the counselors and the principal. Like I would tell them, I would like need help, or like I would wanna like transfer schools, but they would tell me like, "Oh, if you transfer school, we'll be losing money." But I would tell them like, "Hey, that's not my problem." And then I would try to transfer, and then they told me I was a bad kid, but I wasn't, so they had school security always following me

around or taking me to classes, and that felt like I was a bad kid, but I wasn't. (Troy)

That said, the majority of participants indicated that they had at least one school agent who provided them with support during high school. Many participants discussed how school agents such as counselors and teachers provided them with resources they needed at the time. Participants also discussed how school agents provided them with advice and sometimes acted as a therapist. However, considering that all the participants have dropped out of high school, it suggests that participants need more resources then they were provided. Or in some cases, resources participants didn't know they needed. Below are accounts of the various ways school agents provided support and resources to participants.

For example, Maria discussed how school agents were always around to help. She remarked, "Like, if I needed help, if I needed to talk, um, there- there was always someone available... like counselors, school nurses, and some of the teachers that I was more close to. …" (Maria)

However, when she decided to drop out of school, school agents did not talk to her about her options or reach out to her. This suggests that school agents neglected to provide her with resources needed to support her academically.

Another participant recalled how her counselor provided her with as many resources as she had. She stated,

> She (counselor) helped me [and] she always encouraged me to stay in school. She
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> gave me a tutor, she helped me with tutoring, she was like a therapist, a friend.
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> …She found everything she can to give me. But there was nothing more than what I
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> was getting outside. She got me a part-time internship like two days a week. She got
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> me counseling, seeing a therapist. She helped me built this Asian group and she kept

going without me too. (Kristi)

Although her counselor provided her with many resources, the participant also stated that the resources can also be found outside. This suggests that Kristi needed other resources, such as financial aid from the school. When she stated, "More money… my whole thing is money at the time." (Kristi)

In a similar situation, Conner discussed how he was provided with help,

Yeah, I was close with uh, a bunch of teachers and, like, a lot of teachers, like, wanted me to graduate. Like, trying their best to, like, wanted me to, like, get me to school. [They would also ask] how my life would be, like talk to me about what was going on in my life and how I could stay with my schooling. …they told me, how to do my schedule. Like, do this at a certain time, do homework at a certain time. And, like, you know, take breaks between then. Yeah. That's how they did it. …they would always offer me after school studying, tutoring, and stuff. (Kristi)

While he was provided with tutoring, the participant clearly needed other resources then what they were providing. Perhaps he needed counseling because his parents were going through a divorce. While they provided him with academic support, instead of finding a way to keep him in school and to work with his parents to find a solution, school agents talked to him and his parents about his options, and convinced them that continuation school (alternative high school diploma program) is his best option. He stated, "I had a parent conference and the district was just talking to my parents saying this was the best option so they kinda convinced my parents to let me go to the continuation school." (Conner). This suggests that, while school agents tried to provide resources for the participant, if the student was not performing to their caliber they were quick to push students out instead of providing

needed support.

School agents are known to provide as many resources they could to the students. However, in some cases, they neglect to provide resources to the parents who make decisions on behalf of the student. For instance, Samantha discussed how she was provided with all the support she needed when she found out she was pregnant:

When my dad pulled me out of school, a few of my teachers tried to, um, talk him out of it because, um, I was one of their strongest students or maybe favored, and they kind of could tell what the situation was because by that point I think I maybe had looked a little pregnant, maybe. I'm sure they could figure it out that there was probably like an unplanned pregnancy that caused for abrupt leaving school. I think a few definitely, like, tried to advocate and, like, change my dad's mind and, there was a nurse in particular who had been really supportive throughout the whole situation. She was the most supportive adult at the time while I was going through the unplanned pregnancy, um, because I had consulted with her originally when I got on birth control [and] then I confided in her that I thought I was pregnant and then she gave me the pregnancy test and game me my options and counseling. So, I was fortunate to have her because she really gave me the agency to think about all the options possible, like abortion and adoption, what would be involved if I wanted to be a parent. (Samantha)

While some students believed that they were provided with all the resources they needed, some participants discussed how they realized that they were not receiving the appropriate resources to make sound academic decisions. Amber discussed how she had a school agent, her P.E. teacher, who helped her mentally and supported her academically. In addition, she

94

discussed a teacher who believed that students should have the opportunity to attend class even if they were tardy. However, she also discussed how the system is broken and students are disserviced. She remarked,

> There was barely any counselors. I remember like in my freshman year, I didn't know anything about credits, like nothing about credits to graduate. On top of like trying to like survive academically in school. I had to kind of like figure that out myself. But I didn't know my freshman year. But I remember looking at the counselor's line, and every single day the line was so long, where like nobody really got seen. (Amber)

For many students, counselors are the only resources to understanding what the academic requirements were to graduate high school and attend college. However, if students are not able to see the counselor, or the counselor does not provide the resources needed, they disservice students and can negatively impact their view of the academic system. Thus, in this case, school agents were not providing students with basic resources to understand how the education system functions.

Similarly, Jason discussed how he had two school agents that provided support but resources were not enough. He also discussed how he reached out to school agents for help in solving his bullying issue, but they ignored his pleas and ultimately dropped out because it was not resolved. He stated,

"I got two teachers, they so nice to me. One said she cared but, I didn't want her to come to my house, I don't want her to like know I got beat up, because that's more like dangerous area." He indicated that the teacher encouraged him to switch schools by stating, " She told me [to] move school, that we had to apply but my cousin sent me to the school over there on Lakewood. There's a school near my house, I don't know why I can't go to

school near my house." He indicated that he had another good relationship with another teacher, Mrs. Hanson and often visited her house when she held gatherings, stating, "Mrs. Hanson, and then my Spanish teacher, she's so nice. She took me to visit her house. [During the] summertime, we go stay there like week, week whatever, and then she said, "You can stay as long as you want." And I'm like, I said, "No I've got to go back home because of my mom, she might miss me." (Jason)

However, when asking for help to solve bullying issues he remarked, "I told my teacher, I told the counselor, like. So, they can't do nothing, so I scared. I just drop out, two more months. Yeah." (Jason)

Jason had a couple of supportive teachers, but the resources they had provided him were ineffective and the lack of resources other school agents such as the principal and counselors led to his decision to drop out. A possible reason why the teachers' resources were ineffective could be that the teachers themselves did not have a lot of power within the school to effectively stop bullying.

Dropout: Pushed Out, Pulled Out, or Fallout. When I analyzed data for the cause of dropout by type, two types emerged: pushed out, pulled out, data did not reveal any participants experiencing the fallout occurrence. Four participants' transcripts revealed that they were pushed or kicked out of school by bullies or school agents. Five participants' transcripts indicated that they were pulled out of school for various reasons such as unplanned pregnancy, financial situations, mental illness, parent divorce, and parent illness. Language within interview transcripts that indicates each type is in boldface below (my emphasis):

Pushed out. As previously mentioned, the cause of a participant being pushed out of school is when factors within the school environment such as test scores, attendance, disciplinary actions for disruptive behaviors lead to consequences and ultimately resulting in dropout. Data indicated that four participants fall under the pushed out type of dropout.

Kevin discussed how he enjoyed attending school because he was able to learn. He remarked, "I got to learn stuff. I liked all of them (classes). Because I got to learn in each one." However, because he was disruptive in class, he was forced to continue his education in an alternative school. He remarked, "[I decided to leave school] when I kept getting **kicked out** of high school because I was disruptive in the class by talking a lot to the students. So they (school agents) put me in a continuation school." (Kevin)

Jason reminisced on how he enjoyed school and in general did well in school. He discussed how he had a goal of becoming a scientist. However, due to bullying he felt he didn't have a choice but to leave school for safety reasons. Even as he discussed his past goals, he considered returning to school and community college to receive a degree, but believed it was too hard to go back. He remarked,

> I loved it. I loved school, really. I have good grades in elementary school, and then in high school, when I have like two more months left, and then I dropped out. …I wanted be a scientist that studies you know the human body and stuff like that. Biology, chemistry, all that stuff. I feel like maybe I want to study. I really like…. [But] I get really, really scared, **I got beat up every day out here**, every day. I can't ride the bus, I can't drive away from them. And **I told my teacher, I told the counselor**. So they **can't do nothing**, so I scared. I **just drop out**. …I can't go back [to school], because now it's kind of a little hard to go back. It's hard to like start over again. (Jason)

97

Amber discussed how family situations disrupted her educational attainment and eventually due to lack of credit received in school, school agents forced her to leave traditional high school and placed her in continuing education. She stated,

Sophomore year I dropped out because, I wasn't doing good in school, it was just really **challenging for me to balance school and then my mom being sick**. I was in the hospital all the time. I took on the supporting role. I came back in junior year I think I dropped out again, the last semester of junior year. I then went back my senior year, and I got **kicked out** cause like, you know, my credits weren't even like great. So they (school agents) were pretty much like treating me like they could do what they really want with me. It wasn't a decision that I wanted, but my senior year I was like, ready about it, I'm going to do my senior. And then when they (school agents) **kicked me out**, um, they told me that I can go Pal high school (continuation school). (Amber)

Troy also discussed how he liked attending school. He enjoyed math, history, and science courses and believed the topics were easy to grasp for him. However, racial tension at school forced him to make the decision to drop out of school. He remarked,

I liked some classes, but some classes I didn't. I like math, history, and science. It was natural for me to like learn very quick. Probably after [I] started **getting into fights because of race**, like they wouldn't like me 'cause I'm Asian. And then I would go to the principal with my parents, and the principal **wouldn't let me transfer school** and things like that.

When asked if anything else influenced the cause of his dropout, he stated, "mostly racial because I was the only Asian kid in the school." (Troy)

98

Pulled Out. The experience of being pulled out of school is caused by factors that divert participants from completing school. For example, factors such as financial worries, out-of-school employment, family needs, or even family changes, such as marriage and childbirth, can pull participants away from school. These factors can cause students to put greater value on something outside school and therefore to quit school. Five participants indicated they experienced one or more of these factors thus leading them to experience the pulled out type of dropout.

Kristi discussed how she generally liked attending school and her teachers, and enjoyed writing and attending Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). However, being raised by a single mother and having six other siblings made her family's financial situation difficult causing her to choose between school and work. She ultimately decided to quit school and support her family. She remarked,

> [I enjoyed school] for the most part, yeah. I like to write and attend ROTC. [I liked] some of my teachers, not all of them. …I think around 10th grade [was when I decided to drop out]. My **parents again they didn't have much**. Well not my parents, my mom, she was a single mom. She don't have much, we don't have a car. We don't have much growing up. We didn't have a lot of food or a lot of clothing. So I started seeing friends, **seeing other people make money**. [They were] not working illegally and I started to get interested on **how fast money would be able to come in**. And that's about it. I dropped out. (Kristi)

Unlike other participants, Samantha reminisced on how she didn't like school as early as preschool she indicated the only enjoyment she had while attending school was being exposed to cultural food and gym. Although she didn't find much enjoyment in her early schooling years,

she did state she started to like school in college. Aside from disliking school in her early years, Samantha indicated that the root cause of her dropout was her unplanned pregnancy which resulted in her father's decision to pull her out of school.

> For the most part, no, [I did not like school]. I think I knew right away. Like, since preschool or elementary school. …[The] most enjoyable to me that made it worth it, was that I got on the bus and food. …I didn't get at home was what I liked, liked as I had exposure to like, milk and pizza. …I didn't start liking school until college. …I think the most important factor impacting me dropping out of school was my **parents pulling me out** but, what added to that was I really wanted to be able to continue my education and so [it] eventually caused me to move out and then pursue alternative, like, life trajectory to be able to make those decisions. So I would say there, there was a component of me being able to take back agency and control of that situation eventually." (Samantha)

Conner indicated that he liked attending school and believed it's fun and cool, but like other participants, life situations such as parental divorce and relationships stopped him from attending school causing him to place more value on life situations than school. This ultimately led to him being pulled out of school. He remarked,

> My **parents divorcing** I felt…like a bunch of problems in my life, liked to be honest. That's like what stopped me from going to school. …bunch of stuff, relationships and stuff and new relationships were, like, … it was a whole lot of people to be honest." (Conner)

Similar to Samantha, Alex also did not like attending school during middle school. She discussed how the feeling of isolation and not having many friends in middle school caused her to dislike school. She also discussed how in high school she struggled with mental health issues

and a negative relationship with her parents led her to drop out of school. She remarked,

> [I started] feeling like so isolated and not having many friends in middle school. … [I was] in 11th grade. I remember being absent a lot, and I kind of just gave up, as in [it] just kind of happened. [Also] my **mental health** wasn't really good. Like I struggle with, like depression and anxiety and stuff. …That year I was getting into a **lot of trouble with my parents and stuff. I had like a few fights.** And it was just kind of this **breaking point, I think, making me drop out**. (Alex)

Summary

In sum, participants discussed how family, parents, school, peers, neighborhood, racism and intergenerational conflicts influenced or caused them to dropout. Majority of the participants indicated one or more factors as their cause of dropout. Findings also suggested that participants also lacked social and cultural capital resources that are needed to support their educational attainment. Such capital resources participants stated are more ethnic curriculum, parental support, parental knowledge and understanding of how the educational system functions, more educational guidance from school agents, financial support as well as internships, and healthcare related resources and help.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

This study sought to understand the causes of high school dropout and the resources needed to prevent dropout from the perspectives of SEAA students. Primary research question and three sub-questions lead the study: What is the experience of SEAA students who withdrawn from high school?, What types of social and cultural capital play a role in SEAA students cause of high school dropout?, What factors could have prevented SEAA students from experiencing dropout occurrence?, and Which type of dropout (pulled out, pushed out, or fallout) do SEAA students experience more? In this chapter, I discuss how my findings support my conceptual framework, and whether they are related or not related to previous research findings. Lastly, I will also discuss the implications for future research.

Conceptual Framework and Findings

From the perspectives of SEAA participants, there are several factors that caused them to drop out of high school. Such factors are family, parents, peers, neighborhood, and cultural issues such as racism within the school, and intergenerational conflict. While participants have discussed the overall influence of these factors, they also discussed what resources they needed to potentially stay in school.

Such social capital resources are supported by Coleman's (1988) social capital theory. Coleman (1988) suggested that there are three normative structures that can impact participants' educational attainment, family, neighborhood, and school. According to Coleman (1990;1988), families have the ability to transmit capital through time and effort invested by parents and through effective ties between parents and their child. Coleman (1988) also suggested and argued that the absence of one parent creates a structural deficiency that leads to less social capital on which children may draw on. In support of Coleman's theories, findings from this study

indicated that for some participants, their parent(s) do not have the time nor the effort to invest in their educational attainment due to being a single parent. For one participant she indicated that her single mother was raising six other children. She also indicated that her mother was not able to be involved in her academic life and did not provide encouragement nor did she discourage her from dropping out of school. This suggests that her mother's time was spread thinly across all seven children limiting individual quality time. For one participant who experienced her parents' getting a divorced, she discussed how both her parents wanted her to become a doctor, but when her parents filed for divorce, her mother understood the strain of separation on her and did not discourage her from dropping out. This suggests that her mother's energy and time was spent handling the divorce. Thus for this participant, her mother put less effort in encouraging her to finish school.

Neighborhood social capital was also found to influence participants' cause of dropout. According to Coleman (1988), neighborhoods with intergenerational closure can provide parents with increased social capital by providing protection, guidance, and monitoring of children. However, participants discussed how they felt unsafe in the neighborhood they lived and attended school in and how this impacted their ability to focus in school. For one participant, it was common to know of a drug dealer. Because there was a lack of guidance and how common it was to find a drug dealer, she became one herself. For other participants, gang members found on every corner of their streets were normal. According to a study conducted by Singer, et al., (1995), exposure to violence such as gang violence is associated with trauma symptoms, and the experience of trauma can lead to school dropout (Porche, et al., 2011). In a survey conducted in 1989 to understand the level of exposure to violence students experience between the grades of eighth and 10th grade, revealed that 39% of students had been in at least one physical fight within

103

the past year. Students also reported exposure to violence within their neighborhood (threatened with bodily harm, had been robbed, or had been attacked) and school (being threatened or being attacked at school) as well (Singer, et al, 1995). This caused many participants to experience unwarranted trauma that increases their chances of dropping out of school as well as the feeling of being unsafe and unprotected even within their own home. Thus, impacting their ability to focus on academics. Thus, for many of these participants, the neighborhood lacked intergenerational closure causing a lack of neighborhood social capital.

Lastly, participants discussed how the school system contributed to their cause of dropout. Similar to neighborhood social capital, Coleman (1988) believed that if schools had an intergenerational closure, schools can provide protection, monitoring, and guidance to students. However, many participants discussed how they felt unprotected due to racial tension and bullying and received little guidance academically and to resolve issues from school agents. Thus, suggesting that students did not benefit from school social capital.

Participants also discussed factors and influences that are related to Yosso's "Communities of Color Cultural Wealth," her theoretical framework. As previously mentioned, Yosso's framework recognizes the cultural complexities, richness, and uniqueness of culture that non-White communities possess. Thus, for this study, the model is used to explore the strength and experiences that SEAA students bring with them or gained while attending High School. Applying Yosso's framework, findings from this study suggested that participants were influenced by all six types of capitals--aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant.

For aspirational capital, some participants discussed how hopeful they were about their futures. Some aspired to become more focused in school, attend college, and enter professions

such as a scientist. However, their aspiration fell through the cracks due to the lack of role models and for some, the lack of parental and school agent support. For linguistic capital, a few participants recognized that being bilingual in Khmer and English enables them to communicate with community members and their family members. This helped them be more connected to their community and their ethnic background. However, students discussed that a Khmer interpreter rarely existed within the school grounds, if at all. This causes participants to become what is known as a "language broker." Some participants discussed how this was challenging and how at times, made them uncomfortable. For family capital, some participants discussed that the family provided critical support (i.e., babysitting, and encouragement). However, family financial situations and parental divorce contributed to family instability and ultimately led to high school dropout. For social capital, students generally build social capital through social networks and peers. However, for some participants, their peers were also fellow dropouts. One participant discussed how they encouraged each other to drop out of school. Another discussed experiencing the same occurrences of bullying that led to all of his peers to drop out of school. While for a few participants, they have a social network that understood their situations and [supported] their decision to drop out of school. Nonetheless, the majority of the participants did not have a peer social network that helped or encouraged the participants to stay in school. For navigational capital, findings from this study suggest that participants did not have the skills to navigate through the social institution. Similarly, for resistant capital, findings from this study suggest that participants did not have the knowledge or skills to challenge oppression and inequality.

Based on the findings of the perspective of SEAA participants, the lack of resources led participants to experience two of three types of dropout, pushed out and pulled out. According to

105

Jordan et al. (1994) and Watt and Roessingh (1994) students experience the pushed out type of dropout when they face adverse situations within the school environment. For some participants, they were absent from school due to family situations, and for others, poor behavior in class, and lack of academic credit led to school agents dismissing the participants or transferring them to an alternative school. Thus, participants were pushed out of school. For other participants, they experienced the pulled out type of dropout. This type of dropout is when dropping out is due to internal and/or external factors. Participants who experienced this type of dropout discussed how financial worries, family needs such as taking care of their parents, becoming a parent, peer influences, and parental divorce contributed to dropout. Thus, participants were pulled out by other adults or peers. This study's data, however, was lacking in the third type of dropout theory found in other research—fallout. In terms of fallout, it appeared that SEAA students clearly did not choose to drop out; instead, they had some external factors that led to their dropout. As previously mentioned, many participants cited and discussed how family issues (e.g. parental divorce, intergenerational conflicts, financial instability, and lack of parental support), peer influences, and the lack of school agent support lead to high school dropout. Many participants discussed if they were able to receive the support and resources they needed, their academic trajectory positively altered.

Findings and Contribution to Existing Literature

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on dropout in several ways. Findings suggest that many SEAA students had multi-factor issues that ultimately caused their dropout. For instance, the experience of peer bullying in combination with the lack of effort from school agents to address this issue, and parents' lack of understanding of how the educational system worked, led to their decision to drop out. Although multiple factors contributed to drop

106

out, it was not apparent which factor contributed more to the phenomenon, high school dropout.

For instance, one participant indicated that parental divorce played a crucial role in their decision to drop out of high school. However, the participant also indicated that their mother was sick, she wasn't able to see a counselor, and she didn't have enough credit to graduate. Thus, one cannot measure which factor had a greater impact on dropout. This suggests that for many participants it is the accumulation of factors and not the impact of individual factors that ultimately led to dropout. Findings of the current inquiry confirm earlier studies that have suggested the following factors influenced high school dropout: family (Alexander, et al., 2001; Rumberger et al., 2002, Astone & McLanahah, 1994; Afia, et al., 2019; Parr & Bontiz, 2015), school (Rumberger, 1987; Rumberger, 1995; Nairz-Wilth & Fieldman, 2017; Bowditch, 1993, Skiba, Michael, Mordo, & Peterson, 2002, Shollenberger, 2015; Balfanz et al. 2004), neighborhood (Vartainian & Gleason, 1999), and peers (Ellenbogen & Chamberland,1997). Specifically, this study uses the following themes, family and school system and the subthemes, community, intergenerational conflict, parents, school, peers, teachers, and type of dropout to add to the understanding of how these factors contribute to the cause of high school dropout from the SEAA students' perspective.

Family

For many participants, family influence contributed to their cause of high school dropout. Analysis of family influences identified three subthemes, the community participants resided in, intergenerational conflict, and parents.

Community. Morales and Guerra (2006) reported that the higher children's perception of neighborhood violence was associated with lower math and reading achievement. Similarly, Grogan-Kaylor (2006) findings also suggested that negative neighborhood climate can impact

students' academic trajectory. In support of these claims, participants indicated that due to the high gang violence, the shooting occurrences that happened frequently and gang members existing on every corner of the streets; this led to them fearing for their lives and impacted their academic attainment. As two participants indicated that the shooting occurred outside their homes with one indicating a bullet narrowly missed her head. Due to the lack of feeling safe, over time there is a potential toll that can impact students mentally and physically leading to their inability to focus in school, thus can be seen as a factor that causes dropout. This finding supports previous research that suggested that exposure to local neighborhood violence can lead to an increase in stress, depression, and aggression, and a reduction in test scores due to their inability to concentrate in school (Harding et al., 2010; Harding, 2009). While other participants did not explicitly state that the neighborhood impacted their academics, one can assume the gang violence they experienced outside their home and the fear for their life impacted their ability to concentrate on academics. Participants who had interaction with their neighborhood people have suggested that that influenced their decision to drop out of school. As some participants discussed, their neighbors were fellow drop outs or drug dealers. This finding supports the research conducted by Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor (2006) that suggested if students had a positive neighborhood social interaction and supportive adults (Woolley & Bowen, 2007), students have a more positive outlook on school believing that school is important and more connected with school. However, participants in this study had negative social interactions with their neighborhood and lack support from supportive adults leading to a lack of neighborhood social capital.

Intergenerational Conflict. The analysis provides insight into how intergenerational conflict may influence the likelihood of dropping out of high school. Although this was not a

main focus of this study, participants did discuss how their viewpoints and values clashed with their parents, causing a rift in their relationships, and how this rift influenced their cause of dropping out. In general, parents can be seen as having a more traditional view and their child(ren) more mainstream American cultural views. Due to the stresses on family relationships, psychological problems, including anxiety and depression, can develop overtime (Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008). Moreover, findings support previous works, which suggested that females reported greater conflict over issues of dating and marriage than men did, causing intergenerational conflict (Chung, 2001). For instance, Samantha highlighted how the traditional values of her parents choosing to restrict their dating within their ethnic group differed from her dating practices, causing conflicts in their relationship. Therefore, this study highlights and adds to a new factor that potentially influences dropout. For another, Maria, intergenerational conflict led to defying her mother's wishes and rules. For Alex, the conflict between who she wants to become and what her parents view as acceptable this led to anxiety and mental issues. Thus, findings from this study indicate the potential impact of intergenerational conflict as a factor of dropout and warrants further study.

Parents. Findings from this study suggest parents is a common factor in many participants' cause of dropout. Parental factors included family values and ideology, the level of parental support and expectation, family financial situation, and parental divorce.

Saving face. For one participant, family values in combination with the ideology of saving face caused disagreements between her and her parents when she had an unplanned pregnancy. According to Wong (2010), saving face is "the habit of carrying an image of decency and the tendency to keep personal issues away from the public." It has also become a crucial part of the Asian culture (Wong, 2010). While the participant wanted to continue with her education,

her parents wanted to save face and pulled her out of school. This finding suggests the ideology of saving face may cause burden and stress among students who strive to preserve what their parents believe is an image of decency. Thus, research should consider how the ideology of saving face influences students' academic decisions and trajectory.

Parental Expectation and Support. Parental expectation and support have been shown to influence a child's academic attainment and decrease dropout rates (Englund, et al. 2008). Some key indicators that participants indicated that were important in influencing their dropout were, parental involvement include contacts between parents and school, parent-child communication about the school, parental support, and parents' educational aspiration and expectation for the participant. Research has shown that supportive parental attitudes and involvement are better for children's school completion; 27% of dropouts occur with high parent support versus 56% of dropouts with low parental support (Alexander, et al., 2001). For one participant he indicated that he wished his parents were more involved in his academics and had higher academic expectations for him. He suggested that with the support of his parents, his academic trajectory could have been altered. Similar to parental support, there is a growing body of work on parental expectations (Goyette & Xie, 1998; Mau, 1997). Research suggests that many Asian parents have high educational expectations for their children. This is stemmed from the ideology that good grades mean getting into a good school that leads to a good career. For one participant she discussed how this ideology caused her stress and conflict with her parents. She indicated that she wished they were more supportive of who she was and had compared her less to her sister who academically excelled. This finding supports previous research that indicated that increasingly high expectations cause students to feel substantial pressure, sometimes resulting in mental issues and negative relationships with parents (Panel, 2010; Tan & Yates, 2011).

Single Parent and Parental Divorce. According to Coleman (1988), single parent and divorced parent(s) tend to spend less time and effort on their children's educational attainment. Moreover, research has indicated that the parents' divorces take a toll on a child's or children's emotional and mental health (Strohschein, 2005; Cherlin et al., 1998; Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995). Findings from this study support these claims. For two participants, both indicated that parental divorce played a crucial factor in their cause of dropout. They indicated that they were not able to focus in school and were unmotivated to attend school. For instance, one participant discussed how her mother had less of an expectation for her to finish school once she was divorce. Although both cited their parental divorce was not the only factor that caused their dropout, they did talk extensively of how it contributed, thus indicating the impact of their parental divorce may have been the final trigger in their cause of dropout.

School System

All aspects of the school system have been known to influence students' academic attainment. Analysis has indicated for many participants some aspect of school, peers, school agents, activities, and environment has influenced their cause of drop out. The following sections will cover how the school system influenced participants' cause of drop out.

School

School Activities. According to Finn (1989), students who are able to connect with the school are less likely to drop out of school. One way students are able to connect with school is through extracurricular activities (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; McNeal, 1995). For some participants, the act of joining extracurricular activities can be seen as aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) a way to connect with school, to further their educational attainment, and to become more focused in school. Although some participants had aspirations, their aspirations

111

were not fulfilled due to the lack of support and resources needed. For instance, for Jason, he joined track to avoid being bullied afterschool. However, his aspirations were cut short due to the lack of support and help to stop bullying he experienced during school hours. While in many cases after school activities tended to keep students academically focus, research indicates that the type of school activities (e.g., sports team versus fine arts (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; McNeal, 1995) and the type of peers students (Mora & Orepoulos, 2011; Brunello, et al, 2010; Caldas & Bankston, 1997) have can positively influence their educational outcome by helping participant stay focus on school-related activities; or negatively influence their educational outcome by encouraging the participant to conduct deviant behaviors (e.g. ditch school, do drugs, and drink). Given that all the participants who participated in school activities dropped out of school, findings do not support this claim. It is possible that the school activities and organization the participants joined did not promote school connectedness nor positivity influence their academic trajectory. It is also possible that these three participants' life situations were a greater factor in why they drop out of school. For instance, unplanned pregnancy, financial situations, and continuous bullying during school hours.

Aspects of School. Research has indicated that students who view school as safe are less likely to be absent from school leading to a greater chance of graduating (Educational Development Center, Inc., 1996). Roughly half of the participants in this study believed that school was safe. For these participants, they did not see school as being the issue or the cause of their dropout. For one participant she viewed school as even promoting academic success. While school was safe for half of the participants, the other participants viewed school as unsafe with racial tensions being the main reason. Findings on racial tension build on earlier research suggesting that racism may exist within the school environment (Chou &

Reagin, 2015; Museus & Park, 2015). The prevalence of teasing and bullying (Cornell et al., 2012) and racial tension are often known to predict dropout rates. For half of the participants, continuous bullying on and off campus has led to physical fights and their eventual departure from school. Lindfors et al. (2017) has also suggested the importance of school, parent, and student relationship. Lindfors et al. (2017) suggest that school social capital is a combination of relationships between students, teachers, and parents. The more positive and strong the relationship is the more likely students feel connected with school and have a more positive outlook on school. Many participants along with their parents have cited that they sought the help of school agents, however, they indicated that they did nothing to help resolve issues they had. Thus, findings from this study suggest that the relationship between students, teachers, and parents were weak and presumably suggest that participants lacked school social capital. These issues can be seen as a negative school climate and the feeling of an unsafe environment can lead to students making decisions such as leaving school (Duckenfield & Reynolds, 2013; Kasen, et al., 2009; Freiberg, 2005). Thus, for these students, one main factor of their dropout is associated with school safety. Although findings concur with previous findings, this study, however, enhances how individual racism negatively influences the experiences of SEAA high school students due to the segregation of ethnic groups within the school grounds. Thus, the current inquiry adds to a more holistic understanding of the ways that systemic racism may determine the educational choices and experiences of SEAA high school students.

Interestingly, as racism is related to the (model minority myth) MMM, findings did support MMM contribution to high school dropout. As previously mentioned in the literature review, MMM places Asian Americans pinned between the Whites and other minority

populations to maintain the dominance of Whites in society (Poon et al., 2016). However, Asian Americans, being the model minority face similar racisms that other minority populations face. Participants discussed facing racial discrimination white attending school from both school agents and peers. It is possible that, from the perspective of participants, the model minority myth is not a cause of dropout because many factors that cause high school dropout were personal.

Similarly, the CRT suggests that the current institution strategies presume Asian Americans students as superior in comparison to other students (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Presumably, one can believe that school agents also believe that Asian American students are superior enough to also resolve racial tension issues themselves. Thus, school agents disregard the participants' issues. Nonetheless, there is a potential of ethnic discrimination and bias from school agents as well as peers that were not addressed due to the line of questioning. Thus, the impact of the model minority myth and its influence on high school dropout should not be ruled out and should be accounted for in future research.

Peers. Peer influences have been known to impact students' academic trajectory and success. Negative peer influences can be detrimental in terms of factors such as processes of disengagement in school, problem behaviors (Wang & Fredrick, 2014), and a lack of sense of belonging. For some participants, their peers' influences led to a major factor in their cause of dropout. According to Yosso (2005), students can build social capital through their social and peer networks and capitalize on their friendships, their social networks, and the lessons they learned from interacting with peers. However, when participants' social network and peers are fellow dropouts, this suggests that only certain social networks are beneficial. For instance, two

114

participants discussed how their social network of peers influence them to ditch school, do drugs, and consume alcohol and ultimately this factored into their cause of dropout

Teachers. Teranishi (2002) suggested that the role of teachers is to instill the knowledge and resources needed for many students to complete high school requirements. Other research has reiterated that the positive relationship between school agents and students' connectedness to their school has been found to decrease their likelihood of dropout (Stanton-Salazar et al., 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 2011; Davis & Dupper, 2004). Findings from this study suggest that school agents such as teachers did not instill knowledge or resources needed for students to complete high school requirements. While some participants indicated that teachers and school counselors were helpful in giving advice, they didn't provide the proper guidance in helping the participants complete high school. For instance, one participant discussed how she connected with one teacher and the teacher provided academic guidance, but the participant indicated that the resource she really needed from her was guidance and resources in how to obtain an afterschool job or financial aid. For another participant, he sought help from his teachers, counselors, and even the principal to help solve bullying issues. However, he indicated that they brushed off the issue or told him to seek help from other people. In both instances, as well as for other participants, the lack of support from school agents left them feeling hopeless, overlooked, and unmotivated to continue with school. Thus, teachers and other school agents can be seen as a major factor in many participants' cause of dropout.

Although many of the participants' factors can be traced back to family and neighborhood influence, the root cause for the majority of my participants' cause of dropout stemmed from the school's lack of resources and disregard for the participants' needs. For instance, Jason discussed the influence his family and neighborhood had on his cause of dropout.

However, he described in detail how school was the root cause of his dropout. He started the conversation by describing his enjoyment for school and his aspirations. However, due to the lack of help school agents offered to help resolve consistent bullying issues, he eventually dropped out of school. This suggests that the root cause of his dropout is the schools disregard for his safety and concerns. Thus, school agents should be held accountable for the cause of his dropout.

It is suggested that school agents are known to provide resources and guidance to help students succeed in school (Teranishi et al., 2009). However, one can question given by the evidence in this study, if they receive formal training on how to provide such guidance and resources to students, specifically students of color. Participants in this study have suggested that they have supportive teachers and school agents, but they were not provided with specific resources they needed to stay in school. This suggests that school agents have a lack of understanding of students' needs, and perhaps this stemmed from a lack of understanding and of how to be culturally responsive to students of color through teaching. According to Gay (2002), culturally responsive teaching is defined as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (pg. 106). Through this type of teaching, research has suggested that students' academics improve because students are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters (Gay, 2002). However, findings from this study suggest that school agents were not culturally responsive to the needs of their students. Thus, school agents should be held accountable for students' cause of drop out if they fail to respond to the needs of the school's student population. Although we can expect teachers to be culturally responsive, we must expect the same from the administrative leadership.

116

According to Khalifa (2016), culturally responsive leadership can influence the school context such as school climate and address the cultural needs of students, parents, and teachers. However, findings in this study suggest that school agents in high positions such as a principal were not culturally responsive and did not address a negative school climate. As an example, Amber described a principal suggesting that Cambodians who fail to learn and adapt to the American culture should go back to where they came from. Similarly, Troy and his parents met with the principal to address concerns about racial discrimination and anti-Asian sentiments, but the principal did not help resolve the issue. Similarly, Jason also reached out to the principal and received the same response. Based on these findings, it suggests that due to the lack of upper administrative leadership to understand and address the cultural needs of students, teachers lack the role models to be culturally responsive school agents. Thus, there is a need for school agents to be culturally responsive to students' needs as a mechanism to prevent dropout.

Dropout. Students who dropout can experience one of three types of dropout, fall out, push out, and pull out. For many students their family and life situations and their interaction with their environments (school and community) factors into which type of dropout student can experience. Findings from this study suggest that participants experience two of three types of dropout, push out, and pull out. For instance, some participants felt they were pushed out of school using phrases such as "kicked out," and "kicked me out." For participants who experienced pulled out, many cited familial issues such as finance, parental divorce, and unplanned pregnancy that contributed to their dropout. Participants in this study did not experience the dropout type fall out. According to Finn (1989), the process of disengaging with school or falling out of school can start as early as elementary school. However, for many participants, they were engaged in school and cited enjoyment while attending school. Given that

117

many students did not choose to drop out or experienced fall out, this suggests that given more optimal circumstances and needed resources, participants could have potentially continued with school and graduated.

Summary

In summary, findings support previous findings that suggest that dropout is not an event but a process in which students may experience multiple factors that cause dropout (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Suh & Suh, 2007). Present findings suggest that over the course of at least a year or more, students have thoughts of quitting school, have experienced multiple factors such as violence and bullying, have participated in delinquent behaviors, as well as life decisions, differences in family values, and family constraints and issues that contributed to their dropout occurrence. These are, as mentioned above, gradual processes, not events. Furthermore, the findings provide one of the first qualitative studies that seek to understand the range of influences that played a role in SEAA students' high school dropout. As mentioned, while previous studies have discussed other ethnic minority populations, rarely were SEAA students mentioned or studied at the high school level. My inquiry adds to this research by offering a more comprehensive understanding of what causes high school dropout in a population with substantial-high school dropout rates. Moreover, while researchers have documented extensively the causes of dropout and how to prevent it, this phenomenon continues to exist, especially for certain ethnic populations such as SEAA. This necessitates a deeper understanding from the perspective of high school students in more disaggregated data of what is causing high school dropout. Lastly, the findings of the current study, therefore, add to earlier research by enhancing our understanding of how lumping Asian ethnic groups together (Lee 2009; 1994) causes students who need help to go unseen and eventually drop out. Moreover,

findings from this study confirm earlier studies that have suggested the need to disaggregate data to understand the needs of students in different ethnic groups.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The current inquiry has several important implications for future research and practice. Regarding research, as previously mentioned, my participants sampled were limited to SEAA students and disproportionately Khmer/Cambodians. Therefore, future studies should extend these findings by recruiting more diverse SEAA ethnic groups. Future research should also consider focusing on students who eventually returned to an alternative school to receive a degree. Although I found no salient differences among students who eventually received a degree and those who did not in the current sample, the students' academic path after dropping out was not the focus of my examination. Further examination on why they return or not is warranted to encourage other students to continue with schooling.

Second, scholars need to dive deeper into the role of racism that contributes to high school dropout incidents. This inquiry begins to shed light on this phenomenon. However, more qualitative and quantitative research on the extent to which racism led to students feeling hopeless and contributed to a climate of fear is warranted.

Lastly, researchers should examine how intergenerational conflict plays a role in dropout. For example, further questions that resulted from this analysis are, 1) What is the foreign-born parents' versus U.S.-born parents' understanding of the U.S. educational system? And 2) how does this impact their parents' educational decisions?

With regard to the implication for practice, the findings underscore the importance of considering the potential consequences of racism. While most educators acknowledge that racism can fuel negative consequences, it is equally important that educators react to racist

119

incidents in a meaningful way, in order to readily resolve the issue for the student and the larger student body. This should not be limited to recognizing that incidents of racism happen, but also to creating a safe space for students to interact without fear for their life.

Finally, educators should consider thinking outside the box and provide unique resources that are tailored to the SEAA students' needs. For example, one participant discussed how they would like to learn about their own culture instead of just U.S. history. This can potentially promote community awareness and possibly create unity with other ethnic groups through similar struggles and experiences.

I conclude by calling on researchers, educators, and policymakers to broaden their awareness of the struggles of SEAA students and to recognize how the model minority myth puts SEAA students at a disadvantage. Moreover, educators should also expand their understanding of how racism and the minority myth shape educational experiences for SEAA high school students.

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Appendix A

Greetings _____,

My name is Elizabeth Kuo. I am currently a student at Claremont Graduate University and am conducting a research project for my dissertation. My dissertation is on understanding the experiences of Southeast Asian American (SEAA) students that lead them to drop out of high school. I am interested in interviewing (1hr or less) people who dropped out of traditional high school, between the ages of 18-30. SEAAs who are currently attending or have attended alternative schools also qualifies. Participants I am recruiting should identify as Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Hmong. Participants will receive a $25 Target or Amazon gift card for their time.

If possible, can you please help refer some organizations that may help with my recruitment process or if you know of people, I would appreciate if you can spread the word.

A little bit about why I am conducting this project…
This research is of particular interest to the researcher for two reasons, 1) My parents are survivors of the Cambodian genocide and are refugees. Both my mother and father had only an elementary level education and was not given the opportunity to further their education when they arrived in the U.S. Thus, they never received a high school degree. 2) I, myself, identify as Cambodian-Chinese and understand the pressure and stress put on students to be successful. Moreover, I was a high school student who struggled to adjust and did poorly academically. Being Asian, I felt embarrassed about my struggles and achievements. Like many students, my struggles went unnoticed and almost cost me my high school degree. Since this dark moment of my life, I wondered if I had had someone who cared or had resources to access, would I have struggled so much? As I am in the position to conduct my own research and answer my own question, I would like to explore this topic with which I resonated.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Liz
M.A. Early Childhood Education
Ph.D. Candidate, Education Policy, Evaluation and Reform

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Understanding the factors and influences that lead Southeast Asian American Student's decision to dropout of High School

PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE A $25 GIFT CARD TO TARGET FOR EACH (1HR) INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

Eligible?

- Between the ages of 18-30
- Have not completed High School
- Must be fluent in English

Location

Interview can be conducted:

- In person
- Online
- By phone.

Interested!

Please contact Elizabeth Kuo at **elizabeth.kuo@cgu.edu** for more information.

Appendix B

Response 1

Dear Liz,

First off, huge congrats on getting to the All But Dissertation stage for your PhD in Education Policy, Evaluation and Reform!

I am forwarding your message by way of cc: to friends (see below my signature Liz' email) who will be able to connect you to Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Hmong in America who dropped out of traditional high school, between the ages of 18-30. Those who are currently attending or have attended alternative schools also qualify. Some of my friends have their own stories of dropping out of high school, working at Hometown Buffets, getting their GED, and going to community college, transferring to Berkeley for undergrad and beyond. I'll let them share their stories.

Liz, I want to thank you for sharing a little about yourself--the fact that you nearly dropped out of high school because you struggled to adjust and did poorly academically under the model minority myth is an incredible cross to bear. That you then went on to college and are now a PhD Candidate at Claremont Graduate School is even more incredible.

What made the difference for me were random folks who intervened at critical moments; not the invisible hand, but the visible heart; enjoy this narrated account where I call them Hidden Superheroes:

https://youtu.be/F7aB_2dK6ZI?t=670

And of course, if you need any help at those critical moments (and even not so critical moments), ask. We don't know when they happen--it's only looking back that we realize how fortuitous we were to have been told this, or advised that.

I'll be here. Here's my cell, xxx-xxx-xxxx, and I text aplenty.

Response 2

Hi Elizabeth,

Glad to see you are doing this important research, and glad to see another Cambodian Chinese American (like me!) in the education research space! Please let me know if I can be of any help on your journey.

I am good friends with xxxx xxxx, the ED of United Cambodian Community of Long Beach. I also know a few teachers in the area who might know of students. Do you want me to connect

you?

and

Appendix C

* Both demographics and background and internal and external factor and influence questions will be asked during the interview.

Demographics and Background Interview Questions:

Demographics and Background:
1. Which ethnic group do you belong to? (SEAA)
   a. Cambodian
   b. Laotian
   c. Vietnamese
   d. Hmong
2. What is the highest degree received or grade attended by your mother? (Family Background/Influence)
   a. Elementary
   b. Middle School
   c. High School
   d. Bachelor
   e. Masters and Above
3. What is the highest degree received or grade attended by your father? (Family Background/Influence)
   a. Elementary
   b. Middle School
   c. High School
   d. Bachelor
   e. Masters and Above
4. Which type of high school did you attend? (School Influence)
   a. Traditional High School
   b. Continuing Education
   c. Both
5. How many years have you attended your high school? (School Influence)
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1 year
   c. 2 years
   d. 3 years
   e. 4 years
6. Which income bracket do you fall under? (Family Influence-SES)

   a. $1 to $9 999
   b. $10 000 to $24 999
   c. $25 000 to 49 999
   d. $50 000 to 74 999
   e. $75,000 and above

7. Do you have any family members who dropped out of school? (Family Influence)
   a. Yes
      i. Who? _____
   b. No
8. Did any of your friends drop out?
   a. If yes, how close would you say you are to this friend?

Internal Factors and Influence Interview Questions

Family Influences

1. Did any family members influence your decision to drop out of school? (Family members can include any close and distance relatives as well)
   a. If yes, how so?
2. Was your decision to drop out of high school influenced by family situation(s)?
   a. If yes, how so?
3. Do your family values or religion influence your education?
   a. If yes, how so?
4. Was your decision to drop out of high school influenced by anything related to family?

Parental Influences

1. How did your parents support you academically? (Space to study)
2. Did your parent(s) have any expectations for you academically? (Wanted you to attend college, wanted you to get As)
3. Is there any way your parent(s) could have supported you academically? (Homework, taking you to events, SAT)
4. How involved were your parent(s) in school events such as parent conferences and events held by school?
   a. In Elementary
   b. In Middle School
   c. In High School

Self-Influences

1. Did you like attending school?
   a. If no, when did you start realizing you didn't like school.
2. When did you decide to drop out of high school? Can you describe the time period leading to your decision to drop out of high school?
3. Were there any life events that influenced your decision to drop out of high school? If so, please describe.

School and Peer Influence

1. Were you involved in any school activities or clubs?
   a. If yes, which ones?
   b. Did you find the activities or clubs contributed to you dropping out of high school?

146

2. What did you do afterschool?
3. Did you have a social network of friends? Please describe.
   a. Were they supportive in your academic decisions? If so, how?
   b. Did you friends influence your decision to drop out of school? If so, how?
4. Was there an academic or administrative agent you were close to?
   a. Did you feel you were supported by the academic or administrative agent?
      i. If yes, how so? If not please describe?
   b. Did they provide any academic guidance? Please describe.

External Factors and Influences Interview Questions

Neighborhood Influence

1. Please describe the neighborhood you grew up in?
2. How do you think your neighborhood impacted your academic decision(s)?
3. How did the people in your neighborhood impacted your academic decision(s)?

School Influence

1. Did you feel safe in school? Please describe.
2. Did you feel like you were supported by the school environment?
   a. If yes, how so?
3. Did the school administrative staff reach out to you to offer academic support?
   a. What type of resources did they provide or not?
   b. What type of resources would you have wanted from the school or school agent?