

Issues for the Hmong in Acquiring Nutritious, Reasonably Priced Foods

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Background

Who are the Hmong?

China → Southeast Asia → Vietnam War (Secret War) → United States

Culture & Tradition

- 1) Family patterns
 - Clan-organized, patriarchal, patrilocal
- 2) Language
 - Various dialects (i.e. green and white)
- 3) Spiritual religious orientation
 - Animism
 - Christianity



Map: www.mytravelguide.com

Hypothesis

There is a lack of sufficient knowledge and skills to access healthy foods for the target population of this research, being California Hmong immigrants.



Background

Rationale for the study

1. Prevalence of overweight and obesity
2. Ethnic minorities and chronic diseases
3. Consumption patterns
4. High rate (65%) of Hmong youths overweight or obese¹

¹ Result of Hmong health screenings. La Crosse (WI): La Crosse County Health Department; 2001.

Objective

To identify the needs of Hmong refugees in accessing healthy, affordable foods for health promotion and disease prevention.



Methods

Key Informant Interviews

- 1) Developed questionnaire to explore
 - opinions
 - knowledge
 - experiencerelated to assisting Hmong refugees with on-location food shopping
- 2) Recruited from Sacramento
 - faith-based
 - local organizations
- 3) In-person interviews (1 ½ - 2 hours)
- 4) Audio-taped & transcribed interviews
- 5) Reviewed & identified common themes and unique responses
- 6) Objective process—consensus



Methods

Selected questions from key informants' interviews:

- 1) What do newly arrived immigrants find they need the most assistance with?
- 2) What type of cultural ideas/preferences guide purchase choices of staple food items like produce, meat, and packaged foods?

Results

Key informants' demographics

- Gender: 3 female
- Age range: 30 – 40 years old (Mean age 37)
- Dialect: White
- Marital status: Married
- Number of children: 4 – 9
- Age range of children: 3 – 21 years old
- Years in the U.S.: 20 – 30 years

Key informant's roles & experiences

- Translator for Sacramento Hmong Alliance Church; assisted refugees in food shopping and clinical/educational workshops (5 years)
- Service worker for HeadStart and SacCity; assisted refugees in food shopping (Headstart 6 years; SacCity 4 years)
- Service worker for SacCity; assisted refugees in food shopping (1 year)

Methods

Hmong Refugee Interviews

- 1) Key informant results guided content of questionnaire for target group
- 2) Recruited from Sacramento
 - faith-based (Sacramento Hmong Alliance Church)
 - local organizations (Sacramento Lao Family Center & Asian Resources)



Methods (Cont'd)

3) Interviews:

- self-administered
- interviewer-administered
- in-class administered

4) Identification of common themes & summation of results

5) Objective process—consensus



Methods

Selected questions from refugees' interviews:

- 1) What was your first food shopping experience like? What type of store was it?
- 2) What advice would you give someone who is going food shopping? List as many as possible.

Results

Demographics and characteristics

	N =	%
Sex	Male = 13 Female = 36	Male = 27% Female = 73%
Dialect	White = 33 Green = 16	White = 67% Green = 33%

	N = 49
Age (x)	38
# of years in U.S.	13
# of children	5
# of adults in household	3

Results

Common themes from key informant interviews:

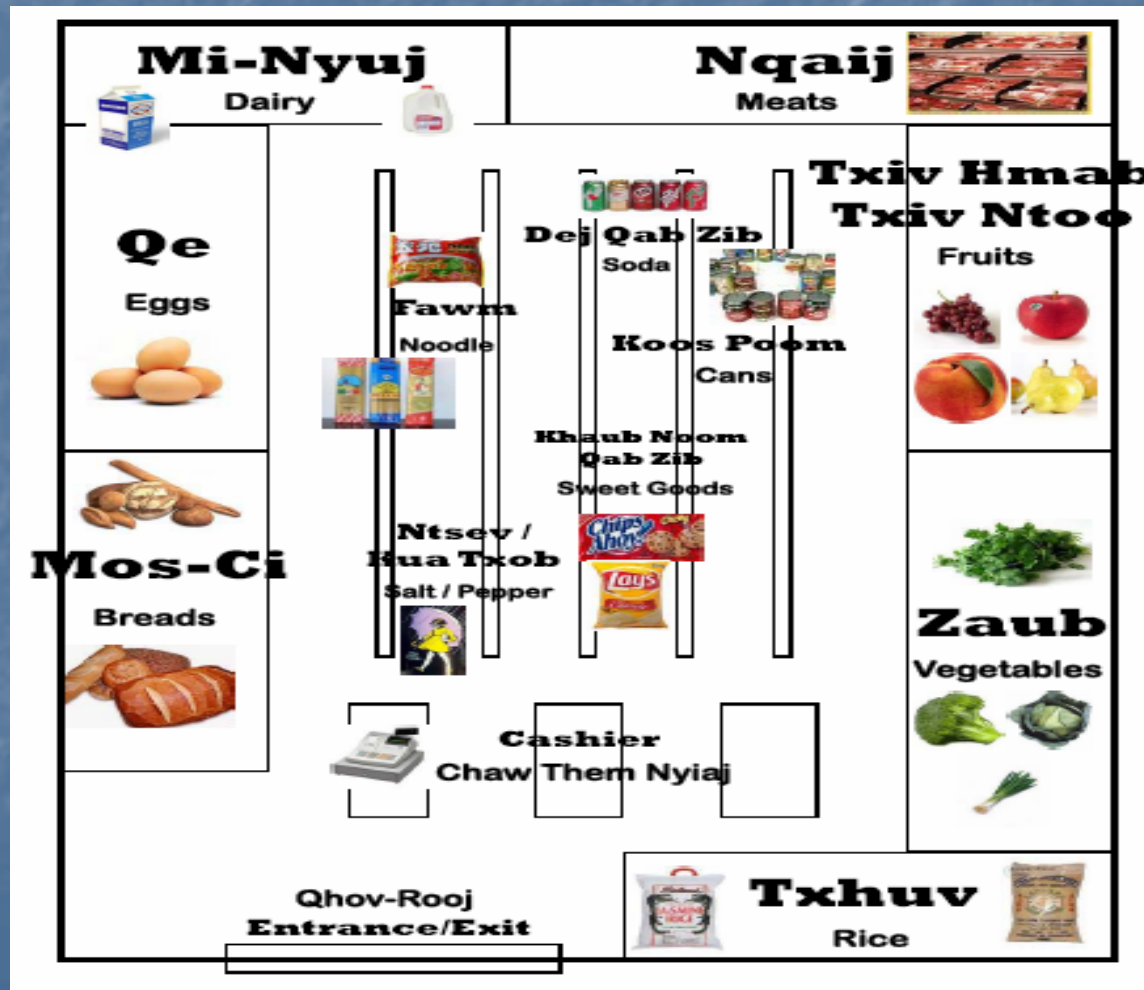
- 1) Identification of grocery products
- 2) Reading of labels



*"The hardest thing is that they don't know the prices...and how to select the meat. They **do** know what they want—but just can't find it or identify it."*

Results (Cont'd)

3) Acquaintance with grocery store layout



Results (Cont'd)

- 4) Language barriers
- 5) Beliefs around spoilage and saving money (as used by Americans)
 - a) market ads
 - b) food shopping lists
 - c) planning prior to grocery shopping



Results

Common themes around difficulties surrounding refugee's first food shopping experience:

- 1) Selection and identification of foods
- 2) Location of foods



"The color told us if something was fresh or not. If the meat was darker, then the meat was fresher."

Results (Cont'd)

- 3) Money system
- 4) Lack of Hmong grocery stores
- 5) Lack of transportation



\$ 3.00

100 Chinese Yuan = 13.38 U.S. Dollars

\$ 300.00

"The people we shopped with held our money and counted it for us".

Results

Common themes as advice refugees would give to first time shoppers:

- 1) Grow your own vegetables and buy in bulk
- 2) Taste and try new dishes/foods before buying
- 3) Use advertisements
- 4) Planning
- 5) Ask for transportation



"I would take them shopping with me."

"I would show them the different aisles and where things may be. I would show them using pictures."

Discussion

Need for assistance in the Hmong community:

- 1) High poverty rate
- 2) Exposure to Westernized style of eating
- 3) Lack of practical information and resources
- 4) Lack of transportation, bilingual Hmong employees, and nutritional guidance
- 5) Lack of ability to identify grocery products
- 6) Lack of ability to understand money system
- 7) Lack of familiarity with methods in saving money (unit pricing)

Conclusion

What is needed & what is next?

- 1) Improvement on basic levels
 - a) Transportation, on-location food shopping guidance, approachable employees, and nutrition education/awareness
- 2) Visual aids, demonstrations, and videos
 - a) Food demonstration/cooking classes
- 3) Collaborative work



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Key informants from Sacramento County

Sacramento County Hmong community members

Sacramento Hmong Alliance Church

Sacramento Lao Family Center

Asian Resources of Sacramento