

DISSERTATION

VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN STUDENTS AT MIDWESTERN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY

Submitted by

Cynthia A. Bottrell

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2007

UMI Number: 3279495

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3279495

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

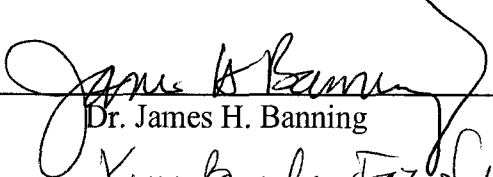
ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

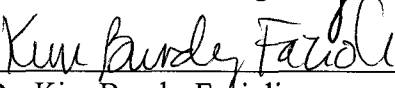
APRIL 5, 2007

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED
UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY CYNTHIA BOTTRELL ENTITLED
“VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN STUDENTS AT MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY
COLLEGE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY” BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

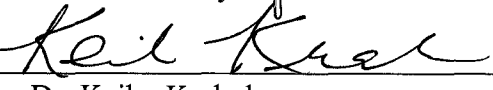
Committee on Graduate Work



Dr. James H. Banning



Dr. Kim Bundy-Fazioli



Dr. Keiko Krahne



Dr. Clifford P. Harbour, Advisor



Dr. Timothy Gray Davies, Director

Abstract of Dissertation

VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN STUDENTS AT MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to discover how heuristic knowledge is developed in the academic and social journeys of Vietnamese-American students enrolled at Midwestern Community College, MWCC (a pseudonym). Additionally, the study explored how Vietnamese-American students are able to utilize heuristic knowledge to overcome barriers to their success, as identified by Padilla et al. (1997). Vietnamese-American students were interviewed in an effort to understand how they describe and explain their “lived experiences” while attending MWCC.

The interviews were in-depth, open-ended, private, individual, face-to-face interviews. The transcript data was analyzed to identify emerging themes among the participants’ experiences. The data was reported using a narrative inquiry approach to produce a composite image of the experiences of the students. The narrative approach provided a vehicle to express the individual and collective voices of the participants.

The research may have implications for community college faculty, staff, and administrators. This may stimulate awareness of Vietnamese-American students and their needs in community colleges. It may affect the design and delivery of student services such as advising and student development programs. This may also bring a new teaching and learning perspective to faculty members who have these students in their classes.

Cynthia Anne Bottrell
School of Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Summer 2007

Acknowledgements

The cover page of this study indicates that this document is solely my work. That could not be farther from the truth. I could not have completed this research project or my doctoral program without the support and encouragement of many individuals in my life.

My husband, Paul, gave me the space and time to pursue not only this project, but also my entire doctoral degree program.

My partner in learning, Rassoul, kept me going when the number of tasks in my life seemed to be too numerous to handle.

My four-legged companions, Rufus and Greta, never refused a walk to allow me time to reflect and knew when to sit quietly by my side when I needed to write or read.

My many friends and relatives graciously understood when I declined opportunities for fun because I needed to study.

My dissertation committee: Dr. Cliff Harbour, Dr. James Banning, Dr. Kim Bundy-Fazioli, and Dr. Keiko Krahne. Your guidance and input contributed to making this dissertation a better document than I could do on my own. Dr. Banning: you convinced me to look at my data and condense it to the essential information while also maintaining the rich nature of the data. Dr. Harbour: your detailed editing, patience, and encouragement were invaluable to my completion of this project.

My participants gave up their personal time to meet with me and share their experiences in the hope of improving the experiences of future students.

To these individuals and the many other people who contributed to my journey, I thank you and appreciate everything you did for me.

Dedication

To my parents, Elizabeth and Jerome Bottrell, I dedicate this dissertation, and all of my academic accomplishments, as a testament to their love. Their quiet tolerance of my studies, travels, and moves throughout my life was always valued.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Setting the Stage	1
Introduction	1
Background	1
Research Context	5
Researcher Perspective	8
Description of Study Site	11
Rationale for Study	12
Purpose of the Study	15
Research Questions	16
Definitions of Terms	16
Conclusion	18
 Chapter 2: Literature Review	 20
Introduction	20
Challenges Faced by Asian-American College Students	22
Synthesis of the Studies	27
Myth of the “Model Minority”	28
History and Description of the Myth	28
Effects of the Myth on Asian-American Students	33
Synthesis of the Studies	36
Academic and Social Integration of Minority Students	36
Tinto’s Model of Institutional Departure	37
Padilla’s Studies	38
Cabrera and Nora Study	44
Synthesis of the Studies	44
Heuristic Knowledge	46
Padilla’s Studies	46
Synthesis of the Studies	53
Conclusion	54
 Chapter 3: Methodology	 55
Introduction	55
Research Design	55
Qualitative Paradigm	56
Narrative Inquiry	57
Description of Study Site	61
Descriptive Charac. of Vietnamese-American Students at MWCC	63
Synopsis of Pilot Project	63
Approval of Project at MWCC	64
Selection of Research Participants	65
Reciprocity	68
Data Collection	68
Data Analysis	71
Resources Required for the Study	73

Ethical Considerations	73
Ethical Concerns Relating to the Researcher	73
Ethical Concerns Relating to the Participants	74
Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Methodology	75
Conclusion	77
 Chapter 4: Results	 79
Introduction	79
Description of Study Site	81
Descriptive Charac. Of Vietnamese-American Students at MWCC	83
Descriptive Characteristics of Research Participants	84
My Participants' Stories	85
Van's Story	86
Van's Background and Journey to the United States	86
Van's Cultural Connections	89
Van's Experiences at MWCC	90
Van's Barriers and Successes at MWCC	92
Van's Sources of Heuristic Knowledge	93
Summary: Van	94
Nancy's Story	97
Nancy's Background and Journey to the United States	97
Nancy's Cultural Connections	98
Nancy's Experiences at MWCC	101
Nancy's Barriers and Successes at MWCC	104
Nancy's Sources of Heuristic Knowledge	105
Summary : Nancy	106
Howie's Story	108
Howie's Background and Journey to the United States	108
Howie's Cultural Connections	110
Howie's Experiences at MWCC	115
Howie's Barriers and Successes at MWCC	118
Howie's Sources of Heuristic Knowledge	121
Summary: Howie	122
Ba's Story	124
Ba's Background and Journey to the United States	124
Ba's Cultural Connections	128
Ba's Experiences at MWCC	132
Ba's Barriers and Successes at MWCC	136
Ba's Sources of Heuristic Knowledge	137
Summary: Ba	139
Yumiko's Story	140
Yumiko's Background and Journey to the United States	140
Yumiko's Cultural Connections	143
Yumiko's Experiences at MWCC	147
Yumiko's Barriers and Successes at MWCC	151
Yumiko's Sources of Heuristic Knowledge	152

Summary: Yumiko	154
Pham's Story	156
Pham's Background and Journey to the United States	156
Pham's Cultural Connections	159
Pham's Experiences at MWCC	160
Pham's Barriers and Successes at MWCC	162
Pham's Sources of Heuristic Knowledge	163
Summary: Pham	164
Summary: Cross-Case Themes	167
Language as a Barrier	167
Discontinuity Barrier	169
Lack of Nurturing Barrier	170
Lack of Presence Barrier	171
Resource Barrier	173
Conclusion	174
Chapter 5: Discussion	177
Introduction	177
Narrative Interpretation – The Photo Album	179
Van's Photos	180
Nancy's Photos	183
Howie's Photos	185
Ba's Photos	188
Yumiko's Photos	190
Pham's Photos	193
The "Family Photo"	195
Connections to the Literature	201
Common Threads/Similarities Among Participants	202
Unique Themes/Differences Among Participants	203
Heuristic Knowledge	205
The Types of Barriers Encountered by Vietnamese-American Students	206
Discontinuity Barrier	207
Lack of Nurturing Barrier	208
Lack of Presence Barrier	210
Resource Barrier	212
Language as a Barrier	214
Conclusions Drawn From the Data	215
Implications for MWCC and other Colleges	218
Recommendations for Future Research	220
Self-Transformation and Reconstruction	221
Conclusion	223
References	225
Appendix A: Letter – Invitation to Participate in Research Study	230

Appendix B: Participant Profile Sheet	231
Appendix C: Interview Guide	232
Appendix D: Participant Consent Form	233
Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation from Study Site	234
Appendix F: Profiles of Participants	235

Vietnamese-American students at Midwestern Community College: A narrative inquiry study

Chapter 1: Setting the Stage

Introduction

This dissertation describes my research project that examined the experiences of Vietnamese-American students at Midwestern Community College (MWCC, a pseudonym). My dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction, research context, researcher perspective, rationale for the study, purpose of the study, research questions, and definition of terms used in the study. Chapter two presents a literature review and chapter three describes the research design, description of the study site, and my methodology. Chapter four discusses the data and findings of my project in the form of unique narratives of my participants. Chapter five provides a narrative interpretation of the data presented in chapter four, a discussion of the connections to the literature review, conclusions drawn from the information gathered, implications and recommendations, and questions for further research in this area of study.

Background

Imagine the year is 1979 and you are walking across a university campus in the Midwestern United States. You would see a variety of students. You may also notice a group of students who are relatively new to the college campus. These are Vietnamese-American students; many of them are recent immigrants from South Vietnam, referred to in the media as the “boat people.” The term “boat people” was indicative of their process of immigration involving travel on any type of boat they could board to leave Vietnam. One student you may meet is Triet (a pseudonym).

Triet attended college in South Vietnam and earned an advanced degree in microbiology and genetics. His graduate degree is not recognized in the United States, so he is working to earn another graduate degree in microbiology. You may also meet Nhan (a pseudonym), who was a medical doctor in South Vietnam, but she is also unable to verify her credentials in the United States. Nhan is enrolled in pre-medical classes so she can apply for medical school in the United States.

I had the privilege of attending classes with these individuals and other Vietnamese-American immigrants while I was attending graduate school to complete a master's degree. I lived in a part of the Midwest where many Vietnamese-American immigrants resided after arriving in the United States. As a science teaching assistant, I spent a large amount of my time in laboratory situations setting up lab experiments. Many Vietnamese-American students had knowledge of science from their studies in their homeland, and they also worked in the labs. In the laboratory environment, I worked one-on-one with a number of Vietnamese-American students, and I became friends with many of them. I learned much about their lives in Vietnam, their decisions to leave their homeland, and their journeys to the United States.

Once I graduated and moved out of state, I did not keep in touch with these individuals. As I progressed in my career as a biology instructor at MWCC, I met many other Vietnamese-American students. At first, most of them were immigrants from Vietnam. As time passed, however, the Vietnamese-American student population started to change, with a higher proportion of students being born in the United States. The parents of these more recent students had arrived in the United States in 1975 through 1985. The students I will describe in the following paragraphs are a small sample of the

numerous students I have known and worked with at MWCC. I still see some of these students in the community or when they return to MWCC to visit.

One of these students was Hon (a pseudonym). Hon was an older student who was a practicing nun in Vietnam. She immigrated to the Midwestern United States with her parents and extended family. Hon wanted to be a math teacher. She studied diligently, always earning A's in her college courses. She would speak and meet with members of the college staff, however I rarely saw her talking to other students. Hon would visit with me often and discuss her family and their expectations. As an older female member of the family, she was expected to care for her younger siblings as well as take care of her elderly grandmother. As a result of these expectations, Hon was not able to spend much time on campus outside of her classes. Hon graduated from MWCC and earned her teaching certificate from a nearby university.

Loc (a pseudonym) was a high-energy student while at MWCC. He lived with his parents and grandparents when he attended MWCC. While at MWCC, Loc worked in the college computer lab and built up a good support network of friends. He would talk openly about his family responsibilities and his family's expectations. One of these expectations was that even though Loc wished to date a Caucasian female student at MWCC, his mother said "no." She said he must marry a Vietnamese-American girl chosen by his parents. Loc also discussed his family's expectations that he would work in the family business on weekends and as needed. Loc majored in computer programming and has good skills for the workplace, however he can't seem to obtain or keep a job that matches his skills. He still works for his parents, helping with their business.

Phu (a pseudonym) was a student who had limited English skills when she entered MWCC. She was advised to take ESL classes but chose not to. She had a difficult time in her classes, failing many of them and expressing her frustration by becoming angry with her instructors. Luckily for Phu, she met Ben (a pseudonym), also a Vietnamese-American student. Ben convinced Phu to take one year of ESL. She completed one year of ESL at MWCC, returned to her university-parallel courses, and earned much better grades. She also made new friends in her classes. Ben majored in pre-engineering and successfully progressed through his courses at MWCC. Phu and Ben began dating while at MWCC, and they eventually transferred to a large state university.

These students had unique experiences and stories as they traveled through higher education in the United States. Many graduated in their chosen fields and received their degrees. I have known these students and many more like them throughout my educational and professional career. I wanted to know more about the experiences of Vietnamese-American students in college, especially community colleges, and specifically at MWCC. As I interact with these students, I sometimes wonder about how their experiences have been different or similar to mine when I was a student. How do Vietnamese-American students experience college at MWCC? More specifically, what are their positive experiences: what do they celebrate and find to be rewarding as they progress through their college experience? What are their challenges, what questions do they have, how do they get these questions answered and how do they face their challenges? Are their experiences at MWCC similar to those of other MWCC students? What were their impressions of the admissions and registration process? Did it meet their

needs? Do their advisors listen to them as individuals? How about their instructors? Where do they find support to be successful in their classes? Does it come from their instructors, from their friends, from their family? Do they feel that they are part of the college community? How easy is it to make friends at MWCC? Are their friends limited to other Vietnamese-American students? Do they feel that MWCC has helped them to grow as individuals and to help them explore their identity as individuals and as Vietnamese-Americans? Is the campus inviting to them as Vietnamese-Americans? What has been the primary source of their knowledge as they have progressed through their studies at MWCC? Have they developed heuristic knowledge as they have progressed through their studies and time spent at MWCC?

I wanted to discover the answers to these questions as a way of understanding the experiences that Vietnamese-American students have at MWCC. The answers I found may have implications for faculty, administrators, and staff at MWCC and also for their counterparts at other community colleges with Vietnamese-American student populations. This information may affect how MWCC and other community colleges design processes such as marketing, enrollment, advising, and student development programs. It may also raise the awareness level of faculty members who have these students in their classes. This may stimulate them to consider how their course design affects not only Vietnamese-American students, but also minority students in general, and to motivate them to integrate a new teaching and learning perspective to their classes.

Research Context

As I started to investigate my topic of Vietnamese-American students in community colleges, I realized that I needed to learn about and focus not only on

Vietnamese-Americans in higher education, but I also needed to learn how they fit into the larger dimension of Asian-Americans in higher education. As I read the academic research literature, I identified some emerging themes relating to Asian-Americans and Vietnamese-Americans in higher education. I introduce my findings in the academic research literature in the section below and will expand on these findings in chapter two.

Asians have resided in the United States since the mid-1800s (Alvarez & Yeh, 1999; Takaki, 1989) and there is a wealth of literature regarding the immigration and history of Asians in the United States. Since Vietnamese-Americans as a group entered the United States relatively recently in comparison to other Asian groups (since 1975), I have chosen to focus on literature relating to Asian-Americans in that same time frame.

The themes that emerged from the literature included the challenges faced by Asian-Americans in higher education, as well as the Myth of the Model Minority and its effects on Asian-American students. Also, as minority students, Asian-American students are included in studies concerning the social and academic integration of minority students in higher education. As a segment of the literature on minority students, there also exist studies concerning how minority students acquire and utilize heuristic knowledge to be successful in higher education.

In regard to the challenges faced by Asian-American students in higher education, Kiang (1992) identified challenges and barriers faced by these students. These challenges included language, family expectations, racial discrimination, and cultural differences. Teranishi (2002) reiterated the challenges identified by Kiang a decade after Kiang's study. In addition, Teranishi discussed the issues and misperceptions that are created due to research data that aggregate Asian-Americans and mask the needs of

Asian-American subgroups. Rhoads, Lee, & Yamada (2002) discussed issues of discrimination and stereotyping faced by Asian-American students.

The Myth of the Model Minority has been the subject of academic research and also the popular news media since the 1980s. I plan to focus on the academic studies of the myth, although it is worth noting the existence of a number of high-profile articles in the popular media (Bagasao, 1989; Brand, 1987; Mathews, 2005; Yin, 2000).

Suzuki (1993, 2002) has studied the evolution of the Myth of the Model Minority over the last two decades. Suzuki's research has addressed the impact the myth has had on Asian-Americans. He cited and discussed the impact of the myth in relation to socioeconomic concerns, as well as issues in higher education. Suzuki (1993, 2002), Chun (1994), and Teranishi (2002) discussed the history and development of the myth in American society. They also cited the negative effects the myth has had on Asian-Americans.

Numerous authors have researched how minority students experience higher education. Padilla has studied the experiences of Hispanic, Chicano, Native American, Asian-Indian, Mexican-American, Black, and Alaska natives in higher education (Mayo, Murguia, & Padilla, 1995; Murguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Padilla, 1999; Padilla & Pavel, 1994; Pavel & Padilla, 1993; & Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997). He has related his study to Tinto's (1975) Model of Student Departure. He also studied how the development of heuristic knowledge relates to the success of these students in college. Padilla indicated that many ethnic-minority students develop heuristic knowledge: knowledge gained outside of the classroom as part of their college experience. The

development of heuristic knowledge allowed the students to learn to navigate their way through the college experience.

Chapter two will expand on the findings of these academic research articles. The details of these studies and other selected articles provide a foundation for the study of the experience of Vietnamese-American students in community colleges. This foundation was sufficient to provide background for my study, yet it was not specific to the experiences of Vietnamese-American students. This prevented the development of biases on my part that may have prevented me from fully appreciating and understanding the experiences of my research participants.

Researcher Perspective

The goal of my research was to learn more about students that have always been close to my heart as students in my classes, in the hallways, and in my office. These students are Vietnamese-Americans, either those born in America or immigrants who arrived in America as children or young adults. As an educator, my experiences have provided me an opportunity to know Vietnamese-American students. In addition, like other community college students, they are full of life and hard working, with hopes of improving their lives as a result of gaining an education. They face some of the same challenges as other community college students: many of them are first generation college students because their parents did not attend college at all, or did not attend college in the United States. Some of them have socioeconomic challenges similar to many other community college students.

However, many of these students are faced with challenges beyond those of the typical community college student, such as language and culture. I have found them to

be a group with close ties to their culture and their families. At times it has appeared to me that they live two lives: their life within their family and neighborhood and their life at school or work. They may be bilingual, speaking Vietnamese at home and English while at school or work. Their families may have expectations for them to adhere to the Vietnamese cultural traditions regarding responsibilities, socializing, and dating; yet, they may want to be assimilated into the American culture and live according to American norms. These are hard-working students, yet they are not often recognized for their efforts because Americans may assume that they are academically gifted and not in need of assistance simply because they are Asian-Americans. As a result, many of them must find ways to navigate the higher education system on their own.

My experiences and observations indicate to me that some Vietnamese-American students come to the community college with challenges that may be perceived as barriers to their success; nonetheless, they are able to transition to the college environment and earn their degrees. As I explored the experiences of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC, I hoped to uncover the challenges Vietnamese-American students face at MWCC. I was also interested in discovering how these students overcome these challenges, and, more specifically, in discovering if heuristic knowledge plays a role in the success of Vietnamese-American students.

My connection to Vietnamese-American students comes from my observations and understanding of their experiences as a community college instructor, as well as from my own educational experience as a first generation college student. My parents did not understand the challenges associated with attending college. They did not know how to provide support in terms of financial aid, registration, advising, and study skills needed

for college. I worked my way through college, working one or two jobs at a time while attending classes. The local community college was the only option for me. I had a positive experience there because a very supportive counselor helped me work through the system and understand the culture of the college. Her assistance provided me the necessary insider information that I couldn't get from family and friends. She was my source of connection and engagement with the college. Her help and encouragement motivated me to be successful at the community college and to transfer to a four-year university. She was my source of heuristic knowledge.

While I intuitively felt that I could relate to my prospective participants, because of my interaction with students of similar backgrounds, I knew I must also be aware of my own background and biases. As a Caucasian, born and raised in the American Midwest, I had to be conscious of my Eurocentric cultural and educational background. The large metropolitan area in which I grew up was rich in ethnic diversity, although my contact with diversity was limited until I reached college. This was the result of my growing up in a primarily "white" suburb. Ethnic groups were geographically clustered throughout the area. This led to ethnic communities being isolated from one another and having limited interaction across ethnic lines. As a result, even though I wanted to learn about other ethnic groups as a young person, my opportunities to interact with these individuals were curtailed until I was in college.

The university I attended was a large, residential state university (18,000 students). It also had, however, a significant commuter population because it was accessible from a large urban area. A larger state university was also less than ten miles

away. These factors helped create a diverse student population and surrounding campus community.

Even though I had Vietnamese-American friends in college, I did not get to know them holistically. I interacted with them while we were on campus, and we talked about their lives outside of the campus; but I did not visit their homes or neighborhoods. I did not attend their cultural events or family functions. My interaction with students at MWCC is similar. When I visit with Vietnamese-American students after class or in my office, the conversation is very open, but I do not see their real world outside of the college campus. As a result, I feel that my knowledge of Vietnamese-American students' life outside of the campus is limited compared to my knowledge of their life on campus. As I conducted my research, I was aware of my deficiency in understanding Vietnamese-American culture. This awareness enabled me to be more open to my participants' perception of their culture as they have lived it.

As a researcher, I also knew that I needed to set aside my previous experiences with Vietnamese-American students and listen to my research participants' descriptions of their experiences at MWCC. As I developed and presented my findings, I considered these individual biases and subjectivities of my participants and myself and I related these to the intersubjectivity of the interview process in order to construct an overall meaning from the research process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This was my guide in creating a more complete account of the experiences of my participants at MWCC.

Description of study site

MWCC is the largest of three colleges composing a comprehensive community college district in a midwestern state. The district, Heartland Community College

District (HCCD, a pseudonym), serves a large geographic region of approximately 90 miles by 30 miles. HCCD has an enrollment of approximately 7,000 credit students each semester. Approximately 5,000 credit students attend MWCC each semester. The other two colleges in HCCD - Northern Community College (NCC) and Southern Community College (SCC) - each have approximately 1,000 credit students. The demographics of HCCD are discussed in more complete detail in chapter three.

Rationale for study

A significant amount of literature exists concerning the study of Asian-American students in higher education. These studies are both quantitative and qualitative in nature and often focus on students attending four-year institutions rather than community colleges. When studies report data regarding Vietnamese-American students, they are often part of a larger subgroup: Asian-American students, or minority students. Teranishi (2002) noted that the term Asian-American or Asian Pacific American includes 34 ethnic groups. This broad term represents a heterogeneous, not homogeneous, group of individuals differing in language, culture, and religion (Kim et al., 1998; Teranishi, 2002). Additionally, Vietnamese-American students may be clustered into various subgroups depending on the focus of a particular researcher: they may be classified as minority students, Asian-American students, Southeast Asian students (often includes Vietnamese-American, Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai), or Vietnamese-American students.

Lowe (1996) points out that while the label of Asian-American may provide a basis for a unifying culture, it also suppresses and understates the differences among Asians and promotes an identity of Asians as a homogeneous group. Teranishi (2002)

also noted that each subgroup has its own characteristics, needs, and experiences. Therefore, research literature concerning Asian-Americans as a large population does not address the concerns and experiences of Vietnamese-American students in higher education. Chan and Hune (1995) pointed out that a demographic change occurred in the U.S. between 1970 and 1990 that affected the interpretation of the term Asian American: that is, in 1970, 95.2 percent of Asian Americans were Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino. However, by 1990, these three groups comprised only 56.7 percent of the Asian American population, with Southeast Asians (which includes Vietnamese-Americans) comprising the remainder of the population. The Vietnamese-American population is one of the most recent Asian groups to enter the United States. They arrived in the United States either as refugees (individuals forced to leave their homeland) or as immigrants (individuals who chose to leave their homeland).

There were two distinct waves of immigration from Vietnam after the Vietnam War, the first occurring from 1975 to 1978 and the second after 1978. The early immigrants were political refugees who, for the most part, were educated, were familiar with Western culture, and possessed English language skills. Those immigrating after 1978, many of whom were known as the "boat people," were more varied in their skills, were generally less educated, and were less proficient in their English ability (Caplan, Whitmore, and Bui, 1985; Bennett, 1990). This resulted in a socioeconomic stratification within the Vietnamese-American population in the United States. There have been studies completed that have chronicled the experiences of Vietnamese-American individuals and families as they immigrated and settled in the United States (DeBonis,

1995; Kibria, 1993; Leung & Boehnlein, 1996; Leung, Boehnlein, & Kinzie, 1997; Rutledge, 1992; Takaki, 1989).

Garner (1989) noted that while Vietnamese-Americans have attended institutions of higher education in the U.S. since the 1970s, the media have tended to focus on the small proportion who attend the prestigious universities, rather than the majority who attends community colleges and less selective universities. Vietnamese-American students may demonstrate some of the characteristics of the larger Asian-American grouping, but they also have unique characteristics (Kim et al., 1998). This would be due to their culture and history but also because of the circumstances that surrounded their immigration to the United States. Okutsu (1989), and Ruefle, Ross, and Mandell, (1992) noted that Vietnamese-Americans in community colleges may resemble American Indians, blacks, and Chicanos in their educational and social needs more than they resemble the more successful Vietnamese-American immigrants. These individuals tend to struggle academically and socially (Garner, 1989). There is a gap in the academic research literature in regard to the experiences of Vietnamese-American students in community colleges. More specifically, there is no evidence of research concerning the experiences of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. Nor is there evidence of research addressing the development of heuristic knowledge by Vietnamese-American students at MWCC.

Heuristic knowledge is knowledge gained by personal experience. Padilla (1991, 1994) has described the development of heuristic knowledge in minority groups other than Vietnamese-American. An understanding of this knowledge would be valuable to community college administrators charged with leading a college that serves the under-

prepared student. These students may be under prepared because they lack the academic skills needed for college. They may also lack support needed to gain knowledge of how colleges function and how to navigate the college systems.

Qualitative methodologies are well suited to study heuristic knowledge because they can describe the personal experiences of participants. More specifically, narrative inquiry is an appropriate qualitative method for my study because it focuses on the development and understanding of participant stories. As a result of my understanding of the stories of six Vietnamese-American community college students, I was able to obtain a perspective on their lives that has not been reported in the literature. Stated in other words, narrative inquiry provided a way of understanding the role of heuristic knowledge for a unique population of students enrolled at MWCC and many other United States community colleges. Therefore, the study of heuristic knowledge by the utilization of narrative inquiry appeared to be a natural relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to discover how heuristic knowledge is evident in the academic and social journeys of the Vietnamese-American students enrolled at MWCC. Vietnamese-American students were interviewed in an effort to understand their “lived experiences” while attending MWCC. The interviews were private, individual, face-to-face interviews, and the transcribed data were analyzed to identify emerging themes among the participants’ experiences. I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews to acquire the desired knowledge, yet I allowed the participants to feel comfortable to discuss topics that they felt were related to the topic. The data were reported using a narrative approach that developed, blended, and expanded on emerging

themes to produce a more complete image of the experiences of the students. My research may have implications for community college faculty, administrators, and staff, and perhaps those at MWCC. This may stimulate awareness of these students and their needs and may affect the design and delivery of student services such as advising and student development programs. This may also bring a new teaching and learning perspective to faculty members who have these students in their classes.

Primary Research Question

Given my experiences with Vietnamese-American students in my own educational journey and in my work at MWCC, plus the literature on heuristic knowledge, my study focused on how Vietnamese-American students at MWCC rely on heuristic knowledge while they attend MWCC. My primary research question was as follows:

How do Vietnamese-American students develop and rely on heuristic knowledge as they progress through their experience at MWCC?

As I progressed through the research process, I also sought out answers to the following secondary questions:

Are Vietnamese-American students able to develop the heuristic knowledge needed to overcome barriers to their success as identified by Padilla et al. (1997)?

How do Vietnamese-American students describe and explain their experiences at MWCC?

Definitions of Terms

Asian-American: This term refers to a very broad group of people with cultural and geographical links to Asia. This population is comprised of 34 ethnic groups (as

classified by the US Census Bureau) with more than 300 languages (Teranishi, 2002). This diverse group includes individuals from China, Korea, Japan, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and other nations. As a result of this diversity, the population of Asian-Americans includes individuals who are very different socioeconomically, culturally, and politically. They also have different immigrant histories and have differences in educational and occupational situations (Teranishi, 2002). Lee (1994, 1996) indicated that individuals in this group may identify themselves in a variety of ways. Those who feel a close tie to their homeland may identify themselves according to their specific ethnic background (i.e., Korean, Chinese). Those who feel that they are associated with individuals from countries other than their homeland may identify themselves simply as Asians. Those individuals who see themselves in two cultures will often identify with the term Asian-American. For the individuals in this last group, their identity is based on both their Asian and American experiences and identities; they have roots in the United States and do not feel as though they are guests in a foreign land (Lee, 1994, 1996). In some publications, Asian-American, Asian, and Asian Pacific Islander are used interchangeably.

First Generation Vietnamese-American: This term refers to individuals who were born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States. In some publications, foreign-born Vietnamese-American may be used (Zhou, 1997).

Heuristic Knowledge: This term refers to knowledge that is gained by experiences in life. Padilla (1991) contrasts heuristic knowledge with theoretical knowledge. Heuristic knowledge allows an individual to learn the “tricks of the trade” or “rules of thumb” to be successful in an endeavor (Padilla, 1991).

Midwestern Community College (MWCC): MWCC is the pseudonym of the comprehensive community college where this study was conducted.

Second Generation Vietnamese-American: These persons were born in the United States, and their parents were born in Vietnam. In some publications, native-born Vietnamese-American may be used (Zhou, 1997).

Theoretical Knowledge: This term refers to knowledge that is acquired through formal educational experiences, as a result of textbooks and classroom experiences (Padilla, 1991).

Vietnamese-American: This broad term refers to persons living in the United States who were either born in Vietnam or born to parents who are native Vietnamese-American. These individuals may be identified as Vietnamese-American or Ethnic Chinese. Vietnamese-Americans sometimes identify themselves as “Vietnamese-American” as an individual preference. Those who feel a closer tie to their homeland (often first generation immigrants) also consider themselves to be Vietnamese-American; those individuals who see themselves in two cultures (often those born in the United States) will also identify with the term Vietnamese-American (Lee, 1994).

Conclusion

Chapter one provided an overview and introduction to my research proposal. A rationale for the study, a description of the study site, purpose of the study, research questions, and definitions of terms were included in Chapter one. A description of my perspective as a researcher was also presented. As I stated in the introduction, I have had the privilege of interacting with Vietnamese-American college students for more than 25 years. My experiences have provided me with multiple views: as a student and

teaching-assistant peer, as a community college teacher, and as an academic dean. Even though I am not Vietnamese-American, I believe my past experiences allowed me to relate to the students that I interviewed for my project. My years of experience at MWCC also tell me that very little is known of the experiences of Vietnamese-American students attending MWCC. My goal was to learn more about this important student population at a particular community college.

Chapter one also provided an overview of the literature that will be discussed in chapter two. There is a substantial body of scholarly literature concerning Asian-American students enrolled at four-year colleges and community colleges. However, research directly concerning Vietnamese-American students at community colleges is more limited. The literature provides background knowledge, however it does not provide an in-depth explanation of the Vietnamese-American student experience. It does not explain the role of heuristic knowledge in their success. As a result, there is a “gap” in the literature. A more complete account of the literature and this gap will be covered in chapter two.

Chapter two expands on the themes outlined in Chapter one. These themes are as follows: (a) challenges faced by Asian-American students, (b) the Myth of the Model Minority, (c) academic and social integration of minority students, and (d) heuristic knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the United States, the minority student population enrolled at postsecondary institutions increased from 1990 to 2001, while the population of white students remained relatively stable (U.S. Dept. of Education Report, 2004). From 1990 to 2001, the number of Asian-American students (including Vietnamese-American students) increased by 78 percent in all postsecondary institutions and increased by 93 percent in public 2-year colleges (U.S. Dept. of Education Report, 2004).

This chapter presents a review of the academic and research literature that provides a foundation for my dissertation. Specifically, this literature review examines the published research most relevant to my research concerning the experiences of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. This chapter reviews the literature in the context of four broad themes. The first theme is identified as “Challenges Faced by Asian-American College Students” and provides a discussion of the issues and challenges faced by Asian-American students. This is a large and diverse population; yet, its members share common challenges and experiences. The second theme is identified as “Myth of the Model Minority” and narrows my focus on Asian-American students. This section includes two subsections: (a) the history and description of the Myth of the Model Minority and (b) the effects of the myth on Asian-American students. The Asian-American population has experienced both advantages and disadvantages as a result of this general misperception of Asian-Americans. A review of the literature indicates many Americans are familiar with the advantages provided to Asian-Americans by the

Myth of the Model Minority but are not aware of the disadvantages associated with it and its effects on Asian-American students.

These first two themes are followed by two themes that provide the connection between my theoretical framework for my study and my methodology. The first of these themes is a discussion of "Social and Academic Integration of Minority Students in Higher Education." This review focuses on articles that address the integration of minority students rather than integration of minority and non-minority students to provide a better sense of the experience of Vietnamese-American students. This section includes the following subsections: (a) Tinto's (1975) Model of Institutional Departure, (b) Padilla's Studies, and (c) Cabrera and Nora study. Tinto's (1975) model focused on the importance of academic and social integration in the retention of college students. The Padilla's studies section includes four articles by Padilla and colleagues (Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla, 1995; Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel, 1991; Padilla & Pavel, 1994; & Pavel & Padilla, 1993). These four studies address integration of various groups of minority students, with each study based on Tinto's Model. The Cabrera and Nora (1994) study addressed findings related to minority student perceptions of discrimination, feelings on isolation, and the effects on retention.

The fourth and final theme is a discussion of "Heuristic Knowledge." Heuristic knowledge is knowledge that is gained outside of the formal classroom environment (Padilla, 1991). Literature related to the importance of heuristic knowledge for minority students and their experiences at college will be discussed. A synthesis of the main points identified in the research literature will be provided following the discussion of

each theme, followed by a conclusion that will integrate the themes into a larger perspective.

Challenges faced by Asian-American College Students

The term “Asian-American” is inclusive of individuals from diverse nations including Korea, China, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos (Kiang, 1992). Teranishi (2002) indicated that the term Asian-American (or Asian Pacific American) includes 34 ethnic groups who speak more than 300 languages. This section will discuss the unique challenges faced by Asian-American students as reported by Kiang (1992), Teranishi (2002), and Rhoads, Lee & Yamada (2002).

Kiang (1992) discussed the issues and challenges faced by Asian-American students in American universities. This discussion was based on his qualitative study of students at an urban university. An obvious challenge is the language barrier. Kiang’s (1992) interview results revealed these students found themselves in majors such as computer science, engineering, or natural sciences not because of their interests in those areas, but because they require less discussion in class than areas such as psychology, sociology, education, and others. These majors also require less note taking and less reading, although they require mathematics skills already learned in their native land and language. These circumstances allowed many students to avoid the embarrassment of speaking in class and not being understood. They felt they needed to select a major they could master, rather than one that was more interesting. Kiang (1992) used the term “major stories” coined by Bagasao (1989), to describe the conflicts felt by Asian-American students who often choose scientific or technical fields because they feel they have no choice.

Kiang (1992) discussed the importance of Asian American Studies courses or programs at colleges as a means of assisting in the language and social development of these students. Often, Asian-American students were not the minority in numbers in these courses, and many felt more comfortable speaking out in class. As a result, they saw themselves as more valued members of the class. As they learned about their own history and culture, many developed an interest in pursuing a major outside of the technical or scientific arena.

Kiang (1992) also noted that the language challenge, stemming from their needing more time to read course material, was increased due to family pressures. Many of these students worked to help support their families or simply to support themselves. As the first members in their families to attend college, these students also felt the weight of family expectations of a better life. If they faltered, they failed their family as well as themselves. If the students had family members in the United States, they were typically living with them, and they were expected also to take on the responsibility of interpreter for the older, non-English speaking family members. As a result, would-be study time was spent running errands, paying bills, making phone calls - anything that required communication with the outside world (Kiang, 1992).

In addition to the language and family challenges, they faced the reality of being a minority in a racist society. Some of these students were subjected to subtle forms of discrimination on campus from other students or from members of the faculty and staff. This inflicted psychological damage on Asian-American students, which adversely affected their academic performance as well as their social integration into the college community (Kiang, 1992). Kiang also indicated that the perception of Asian-Americans

as “whiz kids” (Brand, 1987) generated discrimination of its own because they were perceived to be free of needs and challenges.

As a result of his study, Kiang (1992) identified areas for future research in relation to postsecondary Asian-American students. The questions Kiang identified were related to students’ survival strategies and their perception of their academic and social integration within the university. Other questions included the role the college experience plays in enabling them to understand and resolve the multiple dimensions of their own identities, as well as how cultural differences, the language barrier, and racial stereotypes affect their classroom experience and resulting social and intellectual development.

Teranishi (2002) discussed the issues facing Asian-Americans a decade after Kiang’s work. Teranishi’s article was a review of his research findings and literature concerning Asian-American students. He noted that Asian-Americans were still perceived as a group that is educationally successful. As a result, they were not included in discussions involving minorities and racial issues. He discussed factors that sometimes excluded them from consideration in research and policy decisions.

One such factor related to the diversity of the individuals included in the population Asian-American. Teranishi (2002) noted that even though this is a diverse and growing population including native-born, immigrant, and international students, data were usually aggregated to produce one set of statistics that may not provide an accurate representation of all Asian subgroups. He noted that the aggregation of data “has seemingly homogenized their experience because it provides a distorted picture of the educational participation of subgroups within the Asian-American population” (p.18).

Teranishi (2002) noted that the experiences of these subgroups have been very different; some groups have flourished while other groups struggle in isolation.

Teranishi (2002) noted the continued presence of factors identified by Kiang (1994). Family obligations such as caring for younger siblings and providing income were still prevalent among immigrant populations. Teranishi (2002) also noted that parental encouragement to get an education was also still present, although he noted immigrant families might experience social or economic challenges not confronting native-born Asian-Americans. For example, if immigrant parents earned their postsecondary degrees before arriving in the United States, they were not familiar with the American college experience and thus could not provide guidance for their children in terms of how to succeed in college. Teranishi (2002) also noted the importance of recognizing that various subgroups are not uniformly concentrated in the same states and cities. They are dispersed throughout the country. As a result, a county or city with a high concentration of Korean-Americans may have different issues than a location with a high concentration of Vietnamese-Americans.

Teranishi (2002) concluded that each ethnic group within the category of Asian-American has a "diverse array of educational issues that should be considered" (p. 21) when examining their issues and needs. This diversity arises from differences in socio-economic class, ethnic and cultural background, immigration history, and length of time living in the United States. He asserted that while the aggregated data indicate otherwise, it would be "a disservice to the 34 Asian-American ethnic groups to assume that they do not have educational problems that should be addressed" (p.21). Teranishi (2002) also noted that since policymakers or college representatives typically do not suspect that

Asian-American students have unmet needs, they are often “intentionally and dangerously misrepresenting the students’ intergroup diversity” (p.21).

Rhoads, Lee, & Yamada (2002) conducted a qualitative case study at a large Research I Midwestern university. The purpose of the study was to examine how students respond to discrimination through a panethnic identity. The authors described the experiences of Asian-American students on campus and also as members of the Asian Pacific American Student Organization (APASO). The APASO group promotes panethnicity among Asian-American subgroups on the campus. The authors interviewed 16 students from eight Asian ethnic backgrounds. The interviews were formally structured, individual interviews and were audio tape-recorded and transcribed. In addition, two key informants – the APASO faculty advisor and a graduate student who had experience in APASO functions – were informally interviewed. The authors also attended biweekly APASO meetings and special events. At one event, the authors collected written comments concerning ethnic identity. These three sources of data were analyzed to produce their findings.

As their work progressed, Rhoads et al. (2002) uncovered information concerning discrimination and stereotyping. These issues were not central to the initial study but emerged as the data was collected and analyzed. The types of discrimination described by students included racial slurs and harassment from non-minority and minority students both on campus and off campus. They also described being stereotyped according to the “model minority” image. This image included being overachievers, being academically capable only in science and math, and being antisocial. Students also reported instances of sexual harassment and stereotyping. Discrimination as a result of being viewed as

outsiders was also discussed. Many of the Asian-American students reported that other students assumed they were international students even though many of them had been born in the United States and had grown up in the Midwest region. They noted that non-Asian students would be surprised by their ability to speak English.

Rhoads et al. (2002) concluded their study by discussing the potential political, cultural, and social benefits that an APASO group can bring to a campus. The benefits included assisting in the identity development of students as individuals and playing a role in reducing racism and discrimination on campus through education about ethnic and racial differences. These actions together could foster the development of multicultural academic communities on campuses.

Synthesis of the studies.

This section discussed the challenges faced by Asian-American students as reported by Kiang (1992), Teranishi (2002), and Rhoads, Lee & Yamada (2002). There were common themes concerning these challenges in the three articles. First were the racial challenges faced by Asian-American students. The three authors each discussed covert discrimination, stereotyping, and omission from racial discussions. Second was the misunderstanding of the diversity of the population that is included in the category of Asian-American and the unique needs of members of its subgroups. The authors cited the importance of awareness that the population included as Asian-American is a heterogeneous group. Related to this was the third theme of the Myth of the Model Minority. The academic research literature of the preceding authors (Kiang, 1992; Rhoads et al., 2002, & Teranishi, 2002) indicated that the image projected by the myth was not consistent with the majority of Asian-Americans, especially for the subgroups

who are the most recent immigrants. This would include the Vietnamese-Americans, Cambodians, and Hmong.

These findings provided an overview of my study. I was cognizant of these three themes as I interviewed my participants and worked through my data. I was also aware that I could not bias my data by attempting to make them fit. The Myth of the Model Minority was a consistent theme throughout these articles (Kiang, 1992; Rhoads et al., 2002; & Teranishi, 2002). The next section of this literature review addresses the myth.

Myth of the Model Minority

The review of literature regarding the Myth of the Model Minority is organized around three subsections. The first discusses the history associated with the development of the myth, and the second subsection describes the myth. The third subsection explains how Asian-Americans themselves perceive the myth and its impact on their personal and academic lives.

While numerous articles exist concerning the myth of the model minority, this discussion will focus on four articles (Chun, 1994; Suzuki, 1993; Suzuki, 2002; and Teranishi, 2002). These articles provided the most complete and relevant information for my research.

History and description of the myth.

Suzuki (1993) provided a synopsis of higher education issues for Asian-Americans as one chapter of a larger work on higher education issues for minorities. His review of research literature included a discussion of the history of the Asian-American experience in the United States, the issues faced by Asian-Americans in higher education, and areas for future research.

Suzuki (1993) noted that for two decades the media has promoted Asian-Americans as the model minority. According to the media, Asian-Americans have experienced extraordinary success in spite of oppression. This perception was fortified by the 1990 Census that indicated the four largest subgroups of Asian-Americans, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, and Asian Indians, had median family and individual incomes exceeding those of Caucasians. Suzuki (1993), however, asserted this conclusion was misleading.

He cited research that reviewed the census data in conjunction with the analysis of socioeconomic factors not taken into account in previous studies. The socioeconomic factors studied included, "education, years of work experience, region of residence, age, generation (or native born vs. foreign born), ability to speak English, gender, weeks worked, and occupational status, among others" (p. 276). Suzuki (1993) indicated that despite the broad depiction of Asian-American success by the media, the majority of researchers believed Asian-Americans as a group had not achieved "full equality and participation in American society" (p. 276).

These research findings included the following key facts: (a) Japanese-Americans were the only subgroup to reach income parity with Caucasians, (b) Caucasians earned a higher return on education than any Asian-American subgroup, (c) educated Asian-Americans can gain access to entry-level jobs, yet experience subtle discrimination as they attempt to move to higher level positions in the organization, and (d) many Asian-Americans were living in poverty, especially Chinese in large urban Chinatowns as well as Southeast Asians in various regions of the country (Suzuki, 1993).

Suzuki (1993) stated that most institutions of higher education had assumed the Myth of the Model Minority was true, and thus Asian-American students were not in need of special programs or policies to promote their success. Suzuki suggested that this perception may provide a partial explanation why Asian-Americans are often omitted from programs designed to serve minorities.

Chun's (1994) comprehensive article described the evolution of the Myth of the Model Minority, the literature that supported the growth of the myth, and the consequences of the myth. Chun (1994) discussed the creation of the myth in the 1960s. This was a time of racial tension across the United States. The media was focused on the African-American population and their quest for racial equality; however, two large newspapers wrote about the Asian American population as the successful model minority. Chun (1994) indicated this created a glowing image of Asian-Americans as a hard-working, uncomplaining minority that succeeded in spite of past and present discrimination. They were to serve as the model for other minority populations to emulate.

Chun (1994) indicated that the model became entrenched in the minds of the public and has been applied to all Asian-American populations, even those arriving in the United States after the 1960s. Articles cited by Chun (1994) discussed Chinese Americans and Japanese-Americans and how they fulfilled the model minority image. By 1974, Korean-Americans were included in the myth.

The myth tells us that Asian-Americans are "an industrious, hardworking, uncomplaining group willing to 'do something' instead of 'sitting around moaning'" (p.96). Media accounts also cited various Asian-American populations as rising to

positions of leadership as businessmen, lawyers, and other professional occupations. Chun (1994) indicated that the myth was not only perpetuated by the popular media, but also by literature in the social sciences. Chun (1994) cited studies (e.g., Varon 1966, Makaroff, 1967) reporting that race discrimination against Asian-Americans (or specific Asian-related populations) was nonexistent. As a result, Asian-Americans were no longer considered a minority. Instead, they were being fully integrated into American society and enjoyed the benefits of that society. Chun (1994) explained that these scholarly works cemented the perception of Asian-Americans as a model minority because the myth now appeared to be based on scientific evidence.

Teranishi (2002) examined the continued belief in the Myth of the Model Minority in American higher education. The author noted that discourse concerning race/ethnicity as a criterion of college admission has focused primarily on African-Americans and Latinos. He noted that when the topic of Asian-Americans enters the discussion, they are often considered a successful minority, overrepresented in higher education, and, as a result, ignored. Teranishi (2002) asserted the myth has led to limited research on Asian-Americans in education, as well as limited consideration of the population in policy decisions.

Teranishi (2002) noted that one reason for the misrepresentation and the continued adherence to the Model Minority Myth is that data concerning Asian-Americans are typically presented in the aggregate. This aggregate data includes data concerning up to 34 ethnic groups, made up of international students, immigrants and native-born Asian-Americans. This has led to all Asian American subgroups being treated as a large, homogeneous group. This does not allow for the characteristics,

demographics, and needs of the ethnic subgroups to be expressed and addressed. As an example, Teranishi (2002) identified the Eighth Annual Status Report for Minorities in Higher Education (2001) and its report that 32 percent of doctorates conferred in the United States went to Asians. In reality, upon closer study, 86 percent of those degrees were awarded to international students. This stands in contrast to the national statistic that 64 percent of Southeast Asians lacked a high school diploma in 1998. The national statistic for all Asian-Americans was that 23 percent lacked a high school diploma in 1998 (Teranishi, 2002).

Suzuki (2002) returned to his analysis of the Model Minority Myth by writing a retrospective analysis of the myth and its effects on students twenty-five years after his original 1977 study. Suzuki reviewed his two original concerns and challenges about the myth. The first concern was related to the timing of the promotion of the myth by the popular media. The 1970s were a time of racial tensions, and Suzuki asserted that the promotion of Asian-Americans as the model minority served to discredit the protests and demands of other minority groups. His second concern was the potential negative impact of the myth on many groups of Asian-Americans. Suzuki (2002) asserted that the growth in acceptance of the myth caused Asian-Americans to be overlooked as a minority with needs because of the perception that they could take care of themselves. One of his primary points in originally challenging the myth was that much of the data collected and reported concerning Asian-Americans portrayed them as one large aggregated group instead of as numerous unique subgroups or populations. The image created by the aggregated data did not allow for a true perception of the needs of some groups of Asian-Americans who were living in poverty or were recent immigrants in need of assistance.

Suzuki (2002) posited a question that asked if there have been changes in the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans since his earlier findings twenty-five years earlier. On one side, Suzuki indicated that social scientists now undertaking research concerning Asian-Americans appeared to be less inclined to apply the stereotype to their studies. Also, the popular media appeared to promote the myth stereotype less frequently. However, on the other side, Suzuki indicated that the perception of Asian-Americans as being free of barriers and discrimination was still widespread. Suzuki's findings indicated that Asian-Americans receive a lower return on education than Caucasians and the poverty rate of Asian-Americans is still higher than for Whites. Also, Asian-American men encounter a "glass ceiling" that prevents their movement into senior-level positions even though they may have the necessary educational credentials.

In higher education, Suzuki (2002) stated that Asian-Americans represented five percent of faculty, more than either African-American or Hispanic populations. A concern he disclosed was that they are disproportionately distributed, with more Asian-American faculty in the sciences and math disciplines than in other disciplines. Also, Asian-Americans are underrepresented in administrative positions in higher education. Suzuki posited that the myth perception of Asians being problem-free may cause educators to overlook the need to develop verbal and leadership skills required for high-level employment positions.

Effects of the myth on Asian-American students.

On the surface, being viewed as a model group may appear complimentary, however members of the group may not always perceive this to be an advantage. Suzuki (1993) noted that Asian-Americans had suffered from the stereotype image. One concern

was that Asian-Americans were being overlooked at institutions, and their needs were not being identified or addressed. When Asian-Americans as a group were promoted as the “shining example,” (p. 277) they became objects of opposition in the eyes of the other minorities.

Suzuki (1993) observed that the myth also included stereotyping Asians as individuals who major only in science, math, and computers. This stereotype persisted even though data indicated the most popular major for Asian-American students was business/management, the same major as students in general. The second most common major was engineering followed by social sciences as third. The presence of Asian-American students in business and the social sciences countered the Model Minority Myth of Asian-Americans majoring only in science, math, and computers. This perception of their majoring in math and science may cause advisors to direct Asian-American students into math and science when they would rather major in a different subject.

Chun (1994) noted that the “perfect” image of Asian-Americans caused them to be overlooked when seeking aid and attention from the government. Chun (1994) explained this perception of inattention or exclusion as a form of discrimination. One example cited by Chun (1994) was that Asian-American students were often placed in the same admission category as white students. This meant that they needed to compete with white students for financial aid and were not perceived to have a high need for aid.

Chun (1994) also asserted that the Model Minority Myth was created as a means of politically exploiting Asian-Americans for the benefit of Caucasian Americans. This provided a means of redirecting media attention towards Asian-Americans and away

from African Americans during the 1960s and 1970s. The myth provided a way to send a message to the other minority populations (especially Blacks) that they could fit into the White world if they tried. Chun (1994) indicated that many Asian-Americans believed this type of publicity made the Chicanos and Blacks turn against them.

Chun (1994) also indicated that the myth promoted an occupational image of Asian-Americans as individuals functioning capably only in jobs requiring technical skills rather than linguistic or social skills. Chun (1994) expressed concern that the perpetuation of the myth could cause school counselors to inadvertently direct Asian-American students into jobs requiring technical skills even though they may express a desire to move in another direction.

Teranishi (2002) noted that the treatment of Asian-Americans as a homogeneous group has concealed the regional heterogeneity of the group throughout the United States. Teranishi contends that in a region with a high concentration of one subgroup, the specific social, cultural, immigrant, and ethnic status of members of that group should be considered rather than the perceived need of the larger homogeneous group. These factors create educational needs that are unique to that subgroup and such conditions should be recognized. Teranishi (2002) stated, "it would be a disservice to the 34 Asian-American ethnic groups to assume that they do not have educational problems that should be addressed." (p. 21). Teranishi (2002) further maintained the heterogeneity of the Asian-American group "should be considered in educational research and policy if we are to truly capture the reality of who Asian-Americans are in our nation of changing faces" (p. 21).

Suzuki (2002) reiterated his earlier concerns with the Model Minority Myth. The most significant of these is that institutions tend to overlook or ignore the needs and problems that Asian-American students may have. These may include a lack of Asian-American counselors and advisors, a campus ecology that is not inviting to Asian-American students, and a lack of recognition of instances of discrimination by students and faculty members. Also, the myth may cause admissions and recruiting efforts to unconsciously overlook Asian-Americans, especially underrepresented groups such as Southeast Asian populations.

Synthesis of the studies.

I reviewed four articles by three authors - Chun, 1994; Suzuki, 1993; Suzuki, 2002; and Teranishi, 2002. The primary theme evident in these articles is the perception created by society's belief in the myth. Chun, 1994; Suzuki, 1993, 2002 & Teranishi, 2002 asserted the primary perception created by the myth is that as a group, Asian-Americans are successful and are not in need of assistance. As a result, Asian-Americans may not be considered when programs for minorities are being developed. Chun (1994) and Suzuki (1993, 2002) both indicated that the myth has created increased racial tensions between Asian-Americans and other minorities.

The findings from the preceding academic research literature helped create the theoretical frame for my study. These articles provided relevant information for my research.

Academic and Social Integration of Minority Students

My study focused on the lived experiences of Vietnamese-American students at a community college and their use of heuristic knowledge as investigated through narrative

inquiry. My review of the literature and my experience as a community college instructor and academic dean suggested that academic and social integration would likely be a dominant issue. Accordingly, a review of literature concerning academic and social integration of minority students was appropriate to help ground my study.

Academic and social integration occurs on campus and in the classroom and has been demonstrated to be important to the success and positive experiences of both minority and non-minority students (Sanchez, 2000). Academic and social integration occur at varying levels for all types of students. I wanted to determine if the level of integration of Vietnamese-American students at community colleges might play a role in defining their experiences.

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure.

Tinto (1975) developed a theoretical model concerning the processes involved with student dropout from higher education institutions. He referred to this as his "Model of Institutional Departure." The model was presented as the result of review and synthesis of academic research related to student dropout behavior. The model had two purposes. One purpose was to address the interactions between the institution and the student that lead to dropout. Tinto (1975) indicated that these interactions are different for different individuals. The second purpose of the model was to examine different forms of dropout behavior and to distinguish the processes that cause it.

Tinto's (1975) model of student departure is institution-based rather than systems-based. This means his model "seeks to explain dropout from institutions of higher education, not one that seeks to explain dropout in the system of higher educational institutions" (p. 91). Tinto (1975) compared four-year, two-year, public, and private

institutions as well as higher quality and lower quality institutions in his review and synthesis of the literature.

Tinto's (1975) model linked students' characteristics and their decisions to drop out with their connections to their institution. He considered the decision to drop out as a longitudinal process that occurs over time. He noted that academic and social integration continually affect and modify students' commitments to their educational goals or their commitment to the institution.

Tinto (1975) concluded that a student's level of commitment would ultimately lead to their persisting and graduating, or to dropping out. He stressed the importance of academic and social integration by stating "other things being equal, the higher the degree of integration of the individual into the college systems, the greater will be his commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion" (p.96).

Padilla's studies.

Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991) completed a naturalistic qualitative study concerning social integration at a higher education institution and student ethnicity. This study involved Hispanic and Native American students who were juniors or seniors at a large southwestern university with significant cultural diversity. The researchers used Tinto's 1975 Model of Institutional Departure as a framework and collected data from 24 participants in response to two questions. The first was, "Do you identify yourself as {Hispanic/Native American}?" The second was, "How do {Hispanic/Native American} students as a whole get along socially at the university?" (p. 435).

Murguia et al. (1991) analyzed responses to interview questions. The data indicated that ethnicity is rooted both "biologically" and also in the family. Biologically

rooted ethnicity refers to an individual's physical appearance. The participants were sensitive to "looking different from members of the majority society and, therefore, of being different, of having a different origin" (p. 435). Family-rooted ethnicity develops through close connections to family. This also included friends who were of the same racial and ethnic origin.

The authors described the function of ethnicity in the process of self-identification. Ethnicity provided stability for the student by providing a sense of place or constancy in an ever-changing world. This stability came as a result of associating with individuals of the same or similar ethnicity and shared outlooks on life. The shared outlooks also resulted in ethnicity providing a foundation to the development of a purpose in one's life. Another function of ethnicity was the affective support provided by ethnicity. Ethnicity provided a sense of pride and security, thus giving an overall sense of balance in the students' emotional lives (Murguia et al., 1991).

Based on their findings, Murguia et al. (1991) suggested a modification of Tinto's original Model of Institutional Departure. Tinto (1975) discussed the importance of social integration to student success and retention. He acknowledged the role of small subunits or enclaves on a campus. Enclaves identified by Tinto included sororities, fraternities, and student government, athletic and religious groups. Murguia et al. (1991) suggested expanding Tinto's social enclaves to include ethnic clubs, groups, and organizations. The authors suggested that researchers study not only how ethnic enclaves can promote social integration, but also how they may allow students to be isolated from primary campus life and therefore reduce social integration. Murguia et al. (1991)

indicated that future research should consider these ethnic enclaves when studying social integration involving ethnic participants.

Pavel and Padilla (1993) revisited Tinto's 1975 model when they studied the departure of American Indians and Alaska Natives from postsecondary education. The purpose of their study was to examine the extent to which Tinto's model applied to a sample of students from these two groups. This quantitative study reviewed longitudinal data from the High School and Beyond (HS&B) study administered by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) from 1980 to 1986. Data that were collected included family background, skills and abilities, prior schooling, goal commitment, institutional commitment, formal and informal academic integration, formal and informal social integration, and educational outcome. The participants were sophomores and seniors in college; however, the types of colleges were not identified.

The results of this study indicated that for these students, the most important variables/constructs affecting postsecondary success and persistence were family background, postsecondary intentions, and academic integration. The authors also found that a lack of positive social integration experiences can adversely affect academic life and graduation from college (Pavel & Padilla, 1993). The authors reiterated the importance of promoting ethnic studies and pride, ethnic student enclaves, and culturally appropriate activities to enhance social integration and a positive self-concept. These can play an important role in promoting the completion of a college degree for American-Indian and Alaska-Native students (Pavel & Padilla, 1993).

Padilla and Pavel (1994) also reported findings from a qualitative study of Hispanic and Native-American students. This study also used Tinto's model as a

framework. The authors acknowledged that Tinto's model is typically verified using quantitative means, but they felt this method falls short in determining academic and social integration. As a result, the main purpose of this particular study was to determine a qualitative means of assessing academic integration. The authors examined the effect of academic advising on the academic integration of students in these two minority groups through qualitative methods. More specifically, Padilla and Pavel (1994) interviewed 24 students in order to draw on the actual experiences of the students. The goal was to gain data concerning the students' contact with an advisor. If the participants did not have an advisor, how did they and other Hispanic and Native-American students get academic advice? The students were juniors or seniors at a large southwestern university.

One product of data analysis was the development of a "Concept Model of Academic Advising." The Concept Model provides an overview of academic advising and attempts to explain how academic advising can have an impact on academic integration for minority students. The model focuses on the relationships and roles of academic advisors. The three primary concepts are these: (a) types of advisors, (b) what advisors do, and (c) how advisors advise students. Padilla and Pavel (1994) utilized the Concept Model to analyze their transcript data. They also offered the use of the Concept Model as a means of enhancing the measurement of academic integration as used in Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure.

Padilla and Pavel (1994) found that students who sought out minority or surrogate advisors in place of their assigned advisors reported positive advising experiences. Minority advisors were typically of the same ethnic background as the advisee (Padilla &

Pavel, 1994). Surrogate advisors were not employed by the institution as advisors and may not have been of the same ethnic background as the advisee. A faculty member, a staff person, a family member or other relative or friend could function as an effective surrogate advisor (Padilla & Pavel, 1994).

Another positive function discerned in the study was that an advisor can have insider information. This information can provide the student with knowledge concerning how the college functions. This information can then be used to help the student make the best choices. Padilla and Pavel (1994) indicated that students were aware that they need insider information and express concerns when their assigned advisor did not provide it.

A third positive function of an advisor was the development of rapport with the student. Padilla and Pavel (1994) reported this was a key aspect of academic advising that can lead to improved academic integration. The authors noted in conclusion that further research is needed to study the Concept Model. They suggested studying students from other ethnic backgrounds (Black, Asian, and Caucasian) to determine if the Concept Model would be supported or challenged.

Padilla and his colleagues changed research paradigms when they reported on a related study in 1995. Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla (1995) reported on a quantitative study that investigated the social and academic integration of three groups of minority students: Mexican-American, Black, and Native-American. A survey was administered to students in the three groups as well as to a sample of Caucasian students at a large, predominately white, public southwestern university.

The purpose of the study was to determine if there was a measurable relationship between the social and academic integration of undergraduate students. Similar to Tinto (1975), cumulative GPA was used as the measure of academic integration. The authors also followed Tinto in distinguishing between formal and informal social integration. Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla (1995) defined formal social integration as, "contact with formal representatives and organizations of the university, specifically, contact with faculty and staff and membership in officially recognized student organizations" (p. 543). The authors' definition differed slightly from Tinto's definition, however, because they considered faculty-student contact outside of class as part of formal social integration. Mayo et al. (1995) defined informal social integration as, "participation in the social life of the campus and relationships with fellow students, specifically socializing in residences and classrooms, sharing entertainment, recreation, and meals as well as dating and parties" (p. 543).

Mayo et al.'s (1995) analysis of the data led to their conclusion that "formal social integration has a much greater and more consistent effect on academic performance than does informal social integration" (p. 550). The authors also found that informal social integration has a smaller positive impact on GPA for three of the four student groups. Black students were the exception, showing a larger positive effect from informal social integration than the other three groups. Even though analysis of the data resulted in important findings, the authors noted there were enough differences among the four groups to warrant more study of each group separately.

Cabrera and Nora study.

Cabrera and Nora (1994) surveyed four groups of students (White, Hispanic, African-American, and Asian-American) to determine how they perceived prejudice and discrimination on campus. The survey was administered to members of the freshman class at a public, commuter, predominately white, doctoral-granting midwestern university. Cabrera and Nora (1994) noted that this study was important because perceptions of the existence of prejudice and discrimination can lead to feelings of alienation and increased student drop out. The authors also noted "students are alienated when they are unable to adjust or fit into either of these two dimensions" (p.388).

The authors organized data regarding perceptions of prejudice and discrimination into three subunits. These were (a) racial/ethnic climate on campus, (b) prejudiced attitudes of faculty and staff, and (c) in-class discriminatory experiences. The study results provided evidence that individuals in the three minority groups experience prejudice and discrimination to varying degrees. The authors found that Asian American students regarded experiences in classes as a greater source of prejudice and discrimination than either the racial/ethnic climate on campus or the attitudes of faculty and staff on campus. These in-class experiences were frequently characterized by feelings of isolation from class discussion and feeling singled out in class. Cabrera and Nora (1994) did not offer a specific explanation for this but concluded their findings may have implications for classroom management and instructional practice.

Synthesis of the studies.

In this section, I reviewed six studies. The Tinto (1975) article described the Model of Institutional Departure that functioned as the theoretical framework for four of

the articles I discussed. These articles were Mayo et al., 1995; Murguia et al., 1991; Padilla & Pavel, 1994; & Pavel & Padilla, 1993. Tinto's Model investigated social and academic integration, and it indicated the conclusion that the higher the degree of integration, the greater the commitment to the institution and completion (Tinto, 1975).

The four Padilla studies (Mayo et al., 1995; Murguia et al., 1991; Padilla & Pavel, 1994; & Pavel & Padilla, 1993) focused on integration utilizing various lenses and presented findings that were similar in a number of ways. Each identified one or more factors that are integral to students' achieving social or academic integration. Some common strands that permeated the four articles were the importance of having family connections, taking ethnic studies, and having minority advisors (Mayo et al., 1995; Murguia et al., 1991; Pavel & Padilla, 1993; & Padilla & Pavel, 1994). These common strands in the literature may be relevant to my proposed research.

Cabrera & Nora (1994) studied the perceptions of discrimination and prejudice perceived by minority students. This study examined feelings of isolation felt by minority students. There may be a relationship between feelings of isolation and lack of social integration.

The five articles discussed in this section studied various minority groups (Hispanic, Native-American, Mexican-American, African-American, Asian-American, and Alaska-Native) and the authors indicated that minority groups are unique and heterogeneous, and they cannot be clustered together and considered as one group when examining and assessing academic and social integration. The authors have indicated that each minority may accomplish the two types of integration to varying levels depending on the climate of the institution. Cabrera & Nora (1994) was the only study of

the five to involve Asian-American students. Their findings were not segmented to identify the responses of Asian-related subgroups. These studies were performed at four-year institutions in various geographical regions of the United States. Therefore, these studies provided background for my research. I was cognizant that Vietnamese-American students are unique and may experience academic and social integration differently than other minority groups.

Heuristic Knowledge

This section will address the topic of heuristic knowledge. Padilla's work with various groups of minority students and their experiences at college dominates the work on heuristic knowledge. Accordingly, four articles written by Padilla and his colleagues (Padilla, 1991; Padilla, 1994; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997; & Padilla, 1999) will be reviewed to provide a definition of heuristic knowledge and how it has been applied to students in higher education. Padilla's work is grounded in Tinto's Model of Student Departure as well as in the work of Harmon and King (1985) regarding expert systems. These two authors will provide the foundation for my discussion of Padilla's work on heuristic knowledge.

Padilla's studies.

Padilla (1991) defined heuristic knowledge and also discussed a means of assessing heuristic knowledge in a descriptive paper. The purpose of the paper was to describe a process that would help students succeed in their particular institution. Padilla (1991) noted that successful students require not only theoretical knowledge, but also heuristic knowledge and compiled knowledge. Acknowledging the important systems

theory work of Harmon and King (1985), Padilla defined these terms in the following manner.

Padilla (1991) said theoretical knowledge, “is learned through formal study, as in school or through books and other media” (p. 2). He contended this kind of knowledge “is typically chunked as definitions, axioms, and laws and is expressed as principles and theories” (p. 2). Padilla (1991) emphasized the importance of distinguishing theoretical knowledge as non-localized - or knowledge that has transferability - from heuristic knowledge which is localized to a specific domain (i.e. one campus) and is not transferable.

Heuristic knowledge is acquired through experience. This means the learner must be present in a situation where she may acquire unmediated or hands-on learning. Knowledge acquired in this domain includes, “rules of thumb, ad hoc solutions, tricks of the trade, insider information, customs, norms, practices, and conventional wisdom” (p.85). The learner acquires heuristic knowledge more rapidly with the assistance of a mentor, advisor, friend, counselor, or other individual who has experience with the local situation. Padilla (1991) also noted that the localization of heuristic knowledge prevents it from being generalized beyond its boundaries. For example, a student who has gained heuristic knowledge concerning the steps involved in securing financial aid at one institution may find these steps to be only partially helpful in securing financial aid at a second institution.

Compiled knowledge is the consequence of combining or synthesizing theoretical knowledge and heuristic knowledge. Padilla (1991) noted that students acquire all three types of knowledge as they progress through an institution. He also noted the importance

of acquiring a significant amount of heuristic knowledge as soon as possible after arriving at a new college. This knowledge is important because it facilitates social and academic integration.

Padilla (1991) described the “expert student” (p. 84) as one who can acquire enough heuristic knowledge to overcome locally defined problems on campus early on in their college experience. They can then focus on acquiring the theoretical knowledge needed to graduate from the institution.

Padilla (1991) described a method that could be used by institutions to assess heuristic knowledge acquired and used by their students. Padilla (1991) believed traditional assessment techniques such as entrance or skills exams would not provide a means of assessing heuristic knowledge. He suggested a “dialogical method” (p. 86) for assessment of heuristic knowledge. The dialogue needed for such an assessment may occur between a focus group of students and a researcher. However, it may also occur in other settings depending on the situation. These settings may include dialogue between student and advisor, student and faculty member, two students, or even between two employees of the institution. The method is participatory and allows the participants to exchange information, experiences, and opinions.

Padilla (1991) noted that an added benefit of the dialogical method is that the participants are not only providing data to the researcher or faculty member, but they are also gaining new heuristic knowledge. This assessment technique is transparent because the participants become aware of their learning experience as they provide data to the researcher. Padilla (1991) identified this technique as the “empty matrix approach” (p.92).

Padilla (1991) demonstrated the empty matrix approach using one of his studies on successful Hispanic community college students as an example. According to Padilla (1991), “the desired heuristic knowledge is ‘unfolded’ from the starting point which is the well-formed assessment question” (p. 87).

Padilla (1991) noted that this matrix process allows the researcher to subdivide the heuristic knowledge into subcategories or types of heuristic knowledge depending on the depth of the responses. Padilla (1991) asserted that this technique could provide a good method for assessing the quality and quantity of heuristic knowledge acquired by a student. He also suggested it as a viable technique for advisors and others to use to assist new students in acquiring heuristic knowledge about their institution.

In a subsequent publication, Padilla (1994) changed the name of the process to the “unfolding matrix” (p. 273). In this paper, Padilla described the empty matrix approach in more detail and stated the unfolding matrix is appropriate for qualitative data collection because the cover term unfolds based on “empirical data, inductive logic, and the emerging framework of the study” (p. 277). Padilla (1994) presented two examples of how the unfolding matrix had been used for research purposes. One study examined the student dropout rate of a high school district. The second example concerned a research effort to improve the success rate of minority students in a community college district.

In Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Trevino (1997) the authors reported on their use of the unfolding matrix as the data collection component in a qualitative study that examined barriers overcome by successful college students. The purpose of this study was to develop a local model of successful minority students based on Padilla’s (1991)

“expert student” description. This study by Padilla et al. (1997) led to the description of the Expertise Model of Successful College Students (also referred to as the Expertise Model). The basis of the model is that both theoretical and heuristic knowledge are required for degree attainment. Also, the acquisition of heuristic knowledge must occur early in a student’s college career. The study was completed at a large research university in the Southwest and involved 28 participants. Forty percent of the participants were male and sixty percent were female. There was approximately equal representation of African-American, Latino, American-Indian, and Asian-American students. The participants were identified by staff members and were sophomores, juniors, or seniors. A focus on students beyond their first-year experience was intentional because these students were likely to have sufficient experience on campus to respond to the cover term and the data vectors.

Padilla et al. (1997) developed the local model that identified four categories of barriers that are overcome by successful students. The four categories were the following: (a) discontinuity barriers, (b) lack-of-nurturing barriers, (c) lack-of-presence barriers, and (d) resource barriers. Each of these barriers has two to five subcomponents. The discontinuity barrier addresses barriers that may hinder the student’s transition from high school to college and has three subcomponents: (a) demographic transition (such as small town to large college environment), (b) learning to be on your own, and (c) difficulty coming to terms with the value of having a job versus the value of education. The lack-of-nurturing barrier has four subcomponents and involves the absence of supportive resources available on campus to facilitate the adjustment and development of minority students. The four subcomponents of the lack-of-nurturing

barrier are these: (a) lack of nurturing, (b) lack of family support and understanding, (c) lower expectations of student by faculty or staff, and (d) lack of minority role models (Padilla et al. 1997).

The remaining two barriers are lack-of-presence and resources. The lack-of-presence barrier is connected to the culture and practices of a college that may marginalize, devalue, or omit minority students. This category has five subcomponents: (a) lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum, (b) lack of visibility of minority support programs, (c) cultural isolation, (d) lack of minority role models or mentors, and (e) racial isolation. The fourth barrier, resources, relates to having the financial means to attend college and the ability to seek out and acquire financial aid. It has two subcomponents: (a) lack of money and (b) financial aid system (Padilla et al. 1997).

Once data was collected concerning the four barriers, Padilla et al. (1997) indicated that analysis of two data vectors (a) knowledge – what is known about the barrier and (b) action – how to overcome the barrier, provided data to develop a local concept model for the campus that was studied. Padilla et al. (1997) indicated that local models of successful ethnic minority students might be used to influence policy and practice at institutions. The authors did caution, however, that localized models may not be used to develop generalizations regarding minority student success. They noted, “a local model identifies the heuristic knowledge associated with successful degree completion on a specific campus” (pp. 134-135). The local college can use the information from the local model to initiate local change. This may include improvement/modification of orientation materials given to new students, modification of

the campus to be inclusive of minorities, and identification and elimination of other barriers to success.

Padilla (1999) extended the application of the Expertise Model and the unfolding matrix to the study of Chicano/Chicana students. The article summarized the results of the research. Padilla began by reviewing key concepts from earlier articles (heuristic, theoretical, and compiled knowledge, expert systems, and the process of the unfolding matrix), and he also introduced the concept of the “black box” (p. 131). Padilla (1999) used the black box to represent the campus experience for students. The black box represented the experiential process that awaits incoming students. Feeding into the box is the compiled knowledge they bring with them. Exiting from the box are two groups of students. One group is composed of students who acquire sufficient heuristic knowledge to graduate from their program. The second group is composed of those who do not complete their program (“dropouts”, p. 134).

The black box represents the campus experience of the student. During this time, students are either acquiring heuristic and theoretical knowledge needed to succeed, or they are not. Padilla (1999) indicated that the experiential process represented by the black box would be appropriate for investigation and utilization of the unfolding matrix. In the context of my proposed study, the black box corresponds to experiences of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. My goal was to interview students who have had the opportunity to experience the events likely to enable them to acquire important heuristic knowledge.

Synthesis of the studies.

In this section, four articles by Padilla and his colleagues (Padilla, 1991; Padilla, 1994; Padilla, 1999; & Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997) were reviewed to provide a definition of heuristic knowledge and how it has been applied to students in higher education. Each of these studies involved minority students, although only one involved Asian-American students. Padilla has studied minority students in general and Hispanic students specifically, in regards to heuristic knowledge. These studies involved a qualitative data collection technique known as the unfolding matrix (Padilla, 1991, 1994, 1997). The common theme of these articles indicates the importance of students acquiring heuristic knowledge and also acquiring it early in their college careers. Padilla asserted that students whose parents were born in the United States and attended college gain much of their heuristic knowledge before they arrive at the college (Padilla et al., 1997). They have better parental support and guidance while in high school to know what to expect when they attend college. In contrast, students who have immigrated must gain their heuristic knowledge from sources other than their parents, and much of it may typically be gained while on campus rather than before arriving on campus (Padilla, 1991).

Only one reviewed study (Padilla et al., 1997) involved Asian-American students. In this study, the participants' specific ethnic identities were not known. The study of heuristic knowledge of Vietnamese-American students at a community college is not evident to me, the researcher. These studies provided a significant framework for my research of the experiences of Vietnamese-American students at a particular community college.

Conclusion

In chapter two, I discussed academic literature relating to four themes associated with Asian-American students in community colleges. The four themes were these:

(a) challenges faced by Asian-American students, (b) the Myth of the Model Minority, (c) social and academic integration of minority students, and (d) heuristic knowledge.

These themes provided background to my study by providing an historical perspective on the challenges faced by Asian-American students and the progression of the Model Minority Myth. The academic research literature concerning social and academic integration and heuristic knowledge provided background in relation to minority students in general. This larger view of the subjects provided enough background to conduct my research, yet it was not too abundant to bias my opinions and perspectives as I interviewed my participants: Vietnamese-American Community College students.

The articles and four themes that have been discussed provide the best and most relevant information for my study. I was aware that while these articles provided the foundation of my research, I could not allow them to create bias in my interpretation of my participants' stories. In chapter three, I discuss my methodology for my research project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains how I explored the stories of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. Chapter one provided an overview of my project. This overview described my researcher perspective, the purpose of my study, and the research questions that framed my study. Chapter two provided a review of the literature needed to understand the research on topics most relevant to my study. I reported on the challenges faced by Asian-American students, and gave a description of the Myth of the Model Minority and its implications for Asian-American students. I also reported on Padilla's work with minority students and his unfolding matrix. The unfolding matrix provides one method of data collection and analysis for the study of minority students in community colleges. I did not use the unfolding matrix in my study.

In particular, chapter three explains my research design, indicating why I chose qualitative research and the narrative approach. This includes the details of my methodology, a description of my study site, my method for selecting my participants, and the method of collection and analysis of the data that I acquired. I also discuss the issues of ethics and trustworthiness involved in my study.

Research Design

In this section I will describe the research design and address the rationale for the selection of the qualitative paradigm as the methodology for this study along with the selection of the narrative approach for my method.

Qualitative Paradigm.

Qualitative research was chosen because of its emergent nature. Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as:

an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Qualitative researchers study the socially constructed nature of reality, and they explore how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Creswell (2003) also noted the characteristics of qualitative research. These include the occurrence of the research in a natural setting, and its reliance on multiple methods of data collection. It is emergent rather than preconceived and involves the interpretation of the researcher. The researcher views the study holistically and utilizes reflection in the study. It may involve both inductive and deductive reasoning, and it employs a strategy of inquiry.

This qualitative study focused on a small population of students at MWCC with the intent of discovering, through an inductive approach, the details of their experiences at MWCC. The qualitative research approach allowed me to collect verbal data that I could analyze to reveal the complex holistic picture of Vietnamese-American students' experiences at MWCC. The study relied on and employed Creswell's (1998) characteristics of a "good" study. These characteristics include rigorous data collection procedures that involve the collection of multiple forms of data and sufficient time spent in the field. The primary instrument of data collection was I, the researcher. I designed the study to allow for an emergent design, the presentation of multiple realities, and a focus on the participants' views. I had understanding as my focus, not cause and effect or

comparison of groups. The procedure was holistic and narrative and the goal was to understand and construct meaning (Clinchy, 2003).

I utilized detailed methods of data collection, analysis and reporting of my findings. Data was analyzed using multiple levels of abstraction: employing the use of meaning units, themes, and multiple themes. Also, I employed methods that assisted in ensuring the trustworthiness of my results. I strived to provide the reader with a deep understanding of the experience being studied. The report is a believable, realistic, and accurate description of the complexities of the experiences (Creswell, 1998).

My research followed a constructivist approach to gain an understanding of the experiences and feelings of Vietnamese-American students while they were (or are) at the community college and to relate those experiences to heuristic knowledge. This approach provided loose boundaries that allowed for discussion of related experiences such as my participants' families and culture. Through a series of individual, face-to-face interviews, I worked to draw out, analyze, and synthesize the experiences of six participants. These interviews lead to similar meanings and also to more complex multiple meanings (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003). This approach also allowed me to focus on understanding and experiencing another person's perspective and reality. This allowed me to construct meaning and understanding (Clinchy, 2003).

Narrative Inquiry.

In my study I focused on how Vietnamese-American students at MWCC acquire and use heuristic knowledge. Heuristic knowledge is knowledge gained by individuals through experience (Padilla, 1991). Narrative inquiry is a method that allows a researcher to acquire data in the form of stories that describe the lived experiences of

individuals. Since heuristic knowledge is acquired through experience and narrative provides the means to understand that experience, the narrative approach provided a way to record and examine the details and complexities of how students acquire, use, and rely on heuristic knowledge as they progress through MWCC.

The goal of my project was to interview individuals, and, by providing a safe environment, to gain knowledge of their experiences at MWCC. The use of open-ended questions promoted an atmosphere that allowed the participants to discuss their experiences in uninterrupted stories. The narrative approach allowed me, the researcher, to listen to the stories of my participants, to analyze them for common threads of information, and to retell their stories as part of my own learning experience. Clinchy (2003) described this process as taking constructed experiences, deconstructing them, and then reconstructing them to achieve the final product.

As I analyzed and interpreted my field notes to create my research text, I considered matters such as voice, signature, audience, and narrative form (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the consideration of voice, I considered both my voice and that of my participants. While my research was intended to tell the stories of my participants, I was not able to conceal my own voice, so I needed to find the correct balance between the two. A key consideration was to be mindful of the multiplicity of voices for both the participants and myself. My multiple voices arise from my experiences with Vietnamese-American students as a classroom instructor, as a college administrator, and also as a former college student studying and working with Vietnamese-American students. The multiple voices of my participants arose from their experiences as students at MWCC, as students in a midwestern high school, as members of a close-knit

community outside of the college, and as immigrants who traveled to the United States from Vietnam. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate that voice is closely tied to signature.

The signature is a means of placing the researcher's stamp on a work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Signature creates author identity, although the signature should not be too heavy or too thin. Again, a balance needs to be struck so that the author's signature, formed by their subjectivity and voice, does not overtake the stories of the participants, yet it should not be too thin and lead to an expressionless account of the participants' stories. While voice and signature involve both the author and the participants, a sense of audience relates to the author only.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate that the consideration of audience is a necessary condition to be incorporated into narrative research texts. A sense of audience is needed to create a text that is valuable to the reader. As I wrote, I needed to consider my intended audience: my dissertation committee, community college practitioners, students, other researchers, and interested members of the academic community at large. Once again, balance was important. I needed to create a work that demonstrates high academic quality yet also expresses the feelings and emotions related to me in my participants' stories.

As I worked to integrate voice, signature, and audience into my research text, I also needed to determine the narrative form for my work. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) urge beginning narrative researchers to read numerous examples of narrative texts in an effort to become familiar with the variety of forms. I have done this, and I also gained practice on descriptive narrative form as part of my pilot project. The authors also

indicate that form changes and grows as an author's writing progresses. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) write about the use of narrative for a wide range of research purposes. These purposes may range from the narrative of an experience, to the coding of narratives, or to the analysis of narrative to understand a phenomenon. The narrative form of my interpretation arose from the desire to express the individual and collective voices of my participants. My narrative involves my interpretation of the data as expressed in imaginary photographs of my participants' experiences at MWCC.

As I reflected on the information my participants shared with me as I analyzed my interview transcripts, I realized that the information about their experiences while at MWCC could be understood and characterized by a series of imaginary photographs. These photographs could form the framework of my narrative interpretation. The process created mental images that I used to build a narrative around a series of imaginary snapshots of my participants' experiences at MWCC. These imaginary snapshots allowed me to construct an imaginary "photo album" that expresses their stories as well as a composite of their stories. The final form of the imaginary photo album did not take shape until I had analyzed the data and had written the stories of my participants in chapter four. It was emergent and not a part of my original research plan.

My imaginary photo album contains photos that I could have received from each participant illustrating the situations mentioned above. It is how I have organized my interpretations of my participants' stories and experiences. Therefore, it is not a co-creation, but it tells my participants' stories, providing them with a voice, utilizing my voice as the author as the vehicle. The photo album contains photos from each

participant, and the last photo in the album is a “family” photo, a blending or composite of the other photos in the album.

Overall, I was mindful of the components that I have discussed as I worked to express the meaning and significance of my participants’ stories. My participant’s voices are reflected throughout the analysis and interpretation as excerpts from my interview transcripts. The voices of my participants are also evident in the narrative interpretation as represented by imaginary photographs taken by my participants. My signature, which was influenced by my multiple experiences, formed the framework of my narrative interpretation of the data, while my level of writing was intended for an audience of community college practitioners.

Description of Study Site

MWCC is the largest of three colleges composing a comprehensive community college district in a midwestern state. The district, Heartland Community College District (HCCD, a pseudonym) serves a large geographic region of approximately 90 miles by 30 miles. A nine-member board of directors governs the district. The public elects the members of the board, and each member represents one of nine district regions. The district chancellor reports to the board of directors. Each college is lead by a president who reports to the district chancellor. Each college functions according to district policies and procedures. However, each is provided with enough autonomy to create its own culture and to respond to local community needs.

HCCD has an enrollment of approximately 7,000 credit students each semester. The FY05 total headcount was 11,223 (HCCD Institutional Research, 2005). Approximately 5,000 students attend MWCC each semester. NCC and SCC each have

approximately 1,000 students each semester. The following demographic information is for the district because HCCD does not segment state-reported data according to each campus. HCCD has a credit student population that is 62 percent female and 46 percent full-time. The largest age group is 18 to 22 (41 percent), followed by 23 to 26 and 27 to 30, each comprising 13 percent of the population. The total credit enrollment for HCCD is 60.6 percent Arts and Sciences and 39.4 percent Career Education. The total credit enrollment for MWCC is 54.4 percent Arts and Sciences and 45.6 percent Career Education. The largest Career Education program for HCCD is Health (Nursing and other Allied Health) at 23.4 percent. This is followed by Agriculture at 8.0 percent and Business at 7.1 percent (State Dept. of Education, December 2004 Report). Twelve percent of the district enrollment is composed of minority students (State Dept. of Education, December 2004 Report). Asian or Pacific Islander students comprise approximately 1.5 percent of the HCCD population (State Dept. of Education, December 2004 Report). The district does not segment out Vietnamese-American students from the Asian Pacific Islander group. An unofficial estimate of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC was completed through a query process. The ESL Director did this. This process indicated that approximately 0.7 percent of the MWCC population is Vietnamese-American. The Vietnamese-American population in the primary county of the MWCC service area is 0.76 percent. In that county, Vietnamese-Americans comprise 48 percent of the Asian population (US Census, 2000).

The size of MWCC made it a suitable college for this research project. The population of 5,000 students created a large enough environment to be challenging for a student to navigate through its systems and processes. Yet, it is also small enough to

provide an environment in which students can feel comfortable talking to staff and administrators, and therefore, can feel comfortable talking to a researcher in an interview situation.

Descriptive Characteristics of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC

Vietnamese-American students who attend MWCC typically live in the western end of the college service area. This population is composed of individuals who have been born in the United States as well as individuals who have immigrated to the United States. Vietnamese-American students reflect a typical community college student population. They may be traditional-aged students, who have recently graduated from high school or they may be older, non-traditional students. The traditional students typically attend one specific high school before transitioning to MWCC. Many students are bilingual as a result of speaking Vietnamese inside the home and neighborhood, and speaking English outside of the home, at school, and at other functions (ESL Director, personal communication, December 2004). These students participate in English as a Second Language (ESL) in varying degrees at the high school, according to the MWCC ESL Director (personal communication, October, 2004). My research project included Vietnamese-American students who are first generation immigrants. This occurred by random chance.

Synopsis of Pilot Project

During the Fall 2004 semester, as a part of my course work in my Narrative Inquiry class, I conducted a practice interview. The activity also involved development of a proto-matrix for data analysis and a narrative description of my data. Before I

started the project, I acquired written permission from the president of MWCC. For the practice project, I interviewed one student, Hhan (a pseudonym).

Hhan was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States with her family when she was eleven years old. Her family originally went to Houston, Texas, but moved to the upper Midwest after only a few weeks. Hhan was a pre-nursing student at MWCC. I did two interviews with Hhan. Each interview was 60 minutes long. I had a list of questions organized for the interview. The first interview produced a large amount of information. I had audio taped the interview, and I transcribed it afterwards. During the second interview, I asked Hhan to review the transcript of the first interview, to look for any errors or omissions. The major part of the second interview was spent asking questions that would provide clarification and expansion of topics discussed during the first interview.

The second interview was also audio taped and transcribed by me. I did not ask Hhan to review the transcripts of this interview. I analyzed the two interview texts and constructed a simple matrix based only on Hhan's information. I then wrote a narrative interpretation of Hhan's experiences at MWCC. This work was submitted as the final project for the class.

Approval of Project at MWCC

I carefully reviewed the proposed procedure for my study with the MWCC college president and obtained his permission before starting the study. I also followed the Colorado State University policies concerning human subjects involved in research, and I submitted the H-100 form, my participant consent form, and my interview questions to receive approval of my project.

Selection of Research Participants

Participants for this study were limited to Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. The students involved in the study, by chance, were all immigrants from Vietnam. MWCC has a population of Vietnamese-American students that appears to be at a level that is proportionate to the percentage of Vietnamese-Americans residing in the college service area. The project utilized purposeful sampling to identify students who were interviewed. Since HCCD does not segregate ethnic data in greater detail than “Asian Pacific Islander”, I relied on the director of the ESL program at MWCC to identify potential participants rather than relying on a database survey (query). I was thus able to have access to enough participants to complete my study.

My intention was to interview students in their second year at MWCC or those who had recently left the college. Vietnamese-American, degree-seeking students who were attending the college during the current semester or those students who had left the college (graduated or discontinued study) were my target audience. These individuals would have more educational, social, and administrative (registration, advising, and so on) experiences at the community college to share than first year students.

The timeframe for this selection process was dependent on the approval of my research project by the CSU Human Subjects committee. This approval occurred in December 2005. I immediately began to select participants. My first interview occurred on January 26, 2006, and my final interview was conducted on September 22, 2006. A renewal of the Human Subjects approval was granted on November 9, 2006. This extended the approval to November 9, 2007, in the case of additional interviews.

The process of selecting participants took place from January 2006 through July 2006. This was a slow process. The process was slow because of my experience with my first interview and what I'd learned about methodology from it. As I transcribed the audiotape of the first interview, I decided that I wanted to complete the two interviews and transcriptions for each participant before interviewing another participant. This was necessary due to the various English language skills of my participants. I did not want to confuse the interview content of one participant with that of another participant.

The ESL Director identified students who fit my project criteria (second year at MWCC or graduate). Once identified, each potential student was sent a letter in the US mail. This letter provided a description of the project. Potential students were asked to contact the ESL Director or me, the researcher, if they were willing to participate. As I received names, each student was contacted by me to set up an interview time and location.

As students were contacted by mail, some responded indicating whether they were interested in participating in my study. If they indicated they were interested in participating, I contacted them by phone or email. I described the project and their involvement. Some students declined to participate at that time. Two students declined at first, but decided to participate because a colleague who knew them talked to them and convinced them for me. One student set up an appointment for the first interview but did not show up for the interview. He did not return my phone calls to attempt to set up another date. After two attempts to contact him, I decided that he had chosen to decline participation. When I needed to locate additional participants, I sent second letters to students who had not responded to my first mailing. Each time I did this, I would receive

a response from a few more students, and I would contact those students to request their participation. Ultimately, the selection process involved some self-selection by the students who were invited to participate. It is not clear why some students accepted the invitation to participate, and some decided to decline. The six students who participated were highly motivated and successful in their programs. It is not clear if students who were struggling academically were less inclined to participate. The self-selection that occurred may have had implications for the data that I collected. I may not have reached an important subpopulation of the Vietnamese-American student population: the students with problems.

My initial discussion with the participants involved verifying that the student was either a second-year student at MWCC or a recent graduate. My participants were diverse in terms of age, ranging from 21-years old to 46-years old. The students were in six different majors, with three in college transfer programs and three in career technical programs. My participants were all students who have immigrated to the United States from Vietnam. I interviewed six students. I maintained a list of actual participants as well as potential participants. This provided some alternates in case some of my original students changed their minds about participating in the study. My six participants were all willing to participate in two face-to-face interviews; as a result, I did not need to contact students on the alternate list.

Once a student was verified as eligible for my study, the first interview was arranged by either telephone or email. The second interviews were also arranged by phone or email after the transcripts from the first interviews were completed.

Reciprocity

In regard to reciprocity, my participants did not receive any material or financial payment for participation. I informed them of this before we began the first interview. At the beginning of the first interview, I explained that while their participation may not affect them directly, the end result of the project may benefit the present and future Vietnamese-American population at MWCC or other community colleges. This may have provided them with an intangible benefit of feeling that they may be assisting other students.

Data Collection

Data collection was through individual interviews, and I interviewed six individuals. In my first interview, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my study to the participant in a non-technical manner that s/he could understand and relate to. I assured each participant that his or her identity would be kept confidential by use of a pseudonym. The participant was informed that s/he had the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, and participation was voluntary. The participant was informed of the nature and purpose of the study as well as how it may impact him/her or have potential benefits. The participant was provided ample opportunities to ask questions concerning the process and his or her involvement throughout the study. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form that was appropriate to my study yet met the needs of the Human Subjects committee. After the consent form was signed, each participant was asked to complete a participant profile sheet. After the profile sheet was completed, the interviews took place and were audio taped.

The interviews occurred on the college campus and occurred during times when the campus was open. The interviews were conducted in rooms that were comfortable and provided space for writing notes and audio taping. The rooms were conducive to a conversation between two people and also provided privacy for more openness and discussion of experiences. My participants and I mutually agreed upon the specific location, time, and date of the interviews. The interviews were completed during the daytime and evening, on weekdays and weekends, and at times accommodating to the participants' schedules. I was flexible in my schedule to accommodate the interviewees' schedules and commitments.

My intention was to schedule the interviews as soon as possible after approval by the CSU Human Subjects committee. The actual interview timeframe ranged from January 2006 to September 2006. I was considerate of the academic calendar, and I did not schedule interviews during the first two weeks of the semester, the final exam week, or other high-stress points in the semesters. This was done to allow the participants to get accustomed to their semester schedules yet to avoid the time crunch and accompanying stress that often occurs at the end of a semester.

At the end of each first interview, I explained the process of transcription of the interview tape. I informed the participant that I would contact him/her after the transcripts were completed to make arrangements for a second interview. I mailed printed copies of the transcripts to the participant's home before the second interview occurred. This provided an opportunity for the student to read the transcripts of the first interview. The second interviews were set up by email or telephone. At the second interview, I asked the student to identify any errors or omissions. I also asked if there

was anything else he or she wanted to add to the transcript. Each participant returned his or her copy of the transcript with changes and additions noted. The first part of each second interview was used to go over each identified item. As I reviewed the transcript with the participant, information was added. This information clarified, enhanced, and added richness to the transcripts of the first interview. I also used this second interview time to ask any questions and gain clarification on items I had identified as I transcribed the tape of the first interview.

After the second interview, once transcription of that interview was completed, I mailed a printed copy of the second-interview transcripts to the participant. Each participant emailed his or her comments to me or wrote comments on the copy and returned the copy to me. I completed the two interviews for each participant before interviewing the next participant. Since the transcription process was lengthy, I did not want to confuse the content of one participant's interview with another participant's interview.

The transcription process was lengthy due to the various English language skills of my participants. As I listened to the tapes, I often struggled with the language, needing to listen to segments many times to determine a word or phrase. For each tape, I transcribed as much as I could by hand. This produced a rough copy of the interview. I then gave the hand-written transcription and the tape to an individual who listened to the tape and typed the transcripts. This individual used the hand-written transcription to assist in her typing when she could not understand a word or phrase. Once I received the typed transcription and tape, I listened to the tape again to detect any words or phrases that needed to be changed. In some instances, it was necessary to listen to a statement a

number of times to determine what was being said. Any statements that I was unsure of were identified in the hard copy that was sent to the participant for review. Each participant then corrected these items as we reviewed the transcripts together.

Data Analysis

As I listened to the actual interviews, as I transcribed the interview data, and as I reviewed the transcripts, I identified significant statements. I worked to understand these statements to create overriding or common themes in the data. I also tried to understand my participants' experiences narratively, in terms of the three-dimensional inquiry space: along temporal dimensions, personal-social dimensions, and within place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Throughout the process of data analysis, I was aware of the recursive nature of qualitative and narrative research. As indicated by Daiute and Fine (2003), as I read and reread my field notes, interview transcripts, and reflected on the content, I often changed and refined the direction or course of my data analysis. Ultimately, the meaning units were displayed in tables (matrices). The data was examined and analyzed to develop a textual description (what happened), a structural description (how the phenomenon was experienced), and an overall description of the experience (Creswell, 1998).

Specifically, in the analysis of my data, I created a series of matrices as discussed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The use of these matrices allowed me to organize the copious amount of data into categories. These categories helped to clarify and focus my data. From these first matrices, five theme groupings emerged. These five themes became the backbone of each individual's story recounted in chapter four. This process assisted me in making the transition from field texts to research texts (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate the differences between field texts and research texts. Field texts are descriptive, are shaped around particular events, and are unique to each participant's experience. Research texts are created as the result of asking repeated questions concerning meaning and significance. To develop a research text, the writer looks for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes within and among the participants' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The matrix development process assisted me in the identification of these characteristics and their integration into the development of my research texts.

The first set of matrices was composed of six Within Case Matrices. These were structured to align with my nine primary interview questions. In addition, two other categories, "heuristic knowledge" and "culture and family" were included. The six within case matrices were then merged into a Cross Case Emergent theme matrix. This matrix allowed for comparison of data for each interview question. This allowed me to interweave my researcher interpretation of the experiences with the experiences of the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This process gave rise to the five theme groupings in each participant's story in chapter four. The five theme groupings are these: (a) background and journey to the United States, (b) cultural connections, (c) experiences at MWCC, (d) barriers and successes, and (e) sources of heuristic knowledge. The final step was to present the analysis of the data in a narrative form to create an understanding of the experience of being a Vietnamese-American student at MWCC. This resulted in the six stories found in chapter four. The matrices are included as appendices of this research report.

As part of the interview and analysis process, my participants discussed the barriers they faced while at MWCC. As a final part of the analysis, I examined how the barriers discussed by my participants coincided with the four barriers presented by Padilla et al. (1997). This was not an intended process at the beginning of my project. Since each participant did experience some barriers while at MWCC, this process emerged as my analysis progressed. These barriers are discussed at the conclusion of each participant's story on chapter four.

Resources Required for the Study

This study required a very limited number of resources, essentially office supplies and audiotapes, purchased by the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

As I refined the research process and conducted the interviews, I needed to be cognizant of ethical concerns. These concerns were of paramount importance since narrative inquiry requires that the participants open up their lives, their thoughts, and their feelings to the interviewer. I needed to be aware of the manifold dilemmas of researching the personal (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). In this section concerning ethical concerns, I discuss how ethics related to me as a researcher and also to my participants.

Ethical concerns relating to the researcher.

Merriam (1998) discusses the need to consider the relationship between the interviewee (the participant) and me (the researcher). Merriam cites the significance of qualitative research employing the use of the term "participant" rather than the term "subject." Participant implies a positive relationship involving inclusion, cooperation, and collaboration. Yow (1994) notes that, while the recording of a life story is a collaborative effort, it does not make the interviewer and narrator feel equal. Perceptions

of power relationships will affect the quality of the interview. Power relationships may be based on race, age, gender, ethnicity, and knowledge (Daiute & Fine, 2003; Yow, 1994). As an interviewer, I was aware of these factors that may create an atmosphere in which I may cause the participant to perceive that s/he must give me the “right” answers rather than relating what s/he views as true. As an administrator of an academic division at MWCC, I understood that I might have faced an ethical challenge concerning my research participants either during the research or after completion of the study. It was of utmost importance to protect the confidentiality of my participants. They needed to feel assured that any information provided to me as part of the research would not be used as part of any other activity at the college. This held true for the timeframe of the research and any time afterwards.

Ethical concerns relating to participants.

Narrative inquiry renders the participants more vulnerable than other forms of qualitative research (Chase, 1996). As an interview proceeds, participants may feel embarrassed by the questions asked, or they may feel that their privacy is being invaded. The interview process may cause the participants to view their relations with other people differently from before; this may have either positive or negative effects on those relationships (Merriam, 1998). I needed to consider how I might respond to information that may be private, yet which, as an educator, I may feel needs to be reported. I submitted a Letter of Cooperation to MWCC for approval of my research project. This letter included a provision that provided for the protection of confidentiality for my participants.

I was ethically bound to protect the rights of my participants by employing the following procedures during my research project. I assured each participant that his or her identity would be kept confidential by use of a pseudonym. The participant was informed that s/he had the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, and participation was voluntary. The participant was informed of the nature and purpose of the study as well as how it may impact him/her or have potential benefits. The participant was provided ample opportunities to ask questions concerning the process and his or her involvement throughout the study.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the methodology

Throughout the process, measures of trustworthiness were employed. It was important to know that the researcher “got it right” as described by Creswell (1998). Reissman (1993) indicated that there are no exact formulas to the concept of trustworthiness or validation in narrative inquiry. My measures of trustworthiness included the following processes: member checking through correspondence, multiple reflections on the field notes, clarification of researcher bias, peer review, and a complete description of the research study (Creswell, 2003).

Member checking was accomplished by asking the participants to review the transcripts. I provided each participant with the opportunity to add to, clarify, or correct the text of the transcripts. This was a means of verifying the accuracy of the text through correspondence (Reissman, 1993).

As a means of accomplishing multiple reflections on my field notes, I wrote notes directly after the interview. Transcription of each audio tape was completed before the next interview occurred. I reviewed the transcript multiple times and recorded my

reflections in a journal. I also referred to the criterion of coherence (Reissman, 1993). I related the data and my interpretations to the three levels of coherence: global, local, and themal. I kept an open mind to the fact that, due to the emergent nature of narrative inquiry I may find levels of coherence completely different than any preconceived ideas that I may have had before embarking on the research.

As I proceeded through my study, I needed to clarify and be aware of my own biases. I needed to be aware of my way of knowing (my epistemology) as a result of my life experiences. These experiences have been created through subjective knowing; there are multiple truths and realities, but mine is right for me (Clinchy, 2003). As I interviewed participants, I worked to create a connected mode of knowing between my interviewee and me to create a co-constructed form of knowing, to understand the contexts out of which ideas arise and to focus on and understand another's reality.

As a means of peer review, I asked one colleague and fellow doctoral student to compare the audiotapes to my hand-written notes and to also compare the notes to my typed transcripts for another source of validity. I also asked yet another colleague to assist with typing and proofreading the transcripts. As I analyzed the data, I continually compared my findings to the literature as a means of "checks and balances" to ensure trustworthiness. I also asked my first colleague to review my analysis of the data. This provided for suggestions for improvement, multiple perspectives, as well as additional viewpoints and interpretations to the research work (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). This peer-review process helped to identify emergent themes that I overlooked and assisted me in identification of researcher bias.

Reissman (1993) cites the presentation of a complete description of the research process as one means of ensuring trustworthiness. This includes describing how the data interpretations were developed, making the process visible (include coding development, matrix development, etc.), identifying how the analysis progressed from one phase to the next phase (primary coding to secondary coding), and providing a means of access to the original data. This has been accomplished as a result of the presentation of a complete account of the research process recorded as part of my dissertation text.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the method by which I explored the stories of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. I have explained my research design, indicating why I chose qualitative research and the narrative approach. The discussion also included the details of my actual methodology, including a description of my study site, as well as how I selected my participants, and how I collected and analyzed the data that I acquired. I have also discussed the issues of ethics and trustworthiness that were involved in my study.

My intended outcome was to create a holistic description of the experiences of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC and the role that heuristic knowledge plays in their experiences. This has occurred through the coalescence of knowledge accumulated through individual reconstructions of my participants' experiences and stories (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). I truly believe that the narrative inquiry approach provided me with the best data that could be applied to my research questions.

Chapter one has provided the reader with initial background on the research topic as well as my perspective as a researcher. Chapter two outlined some of the issues that

relate to Asian-American and Vietnamese-American students as they are described in the academic literature. Chapter three has provided the reader with a comprehensive description of my research plan and methodology. Chapter four will present my findings as a result of my data analysis. My findings will be presented as individual stories of my participants' experiences at MWCC. These stories are a combination of direct excerpts from my interview transcripts and my analysis as a researcher. Chapter four concludes with a summary of cross-case themes relative to my participants' experiences at MWCC.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter will reveal the stories told to me by my participants as I explored the journeys of six Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. As stated in chapter three, my study focused on how Vietnamese-American students rely on heuristic knowledge while they attend MWCC. My primary research question was this: *How do Vietnamese-American students develop and rely on heuristic knowledge as they progress through their experience at MWCC?* My secondary research questions were these: *Are Vietnamese-American students able to develop the heuristic knowledge needed to overcome the barriers to their success, as identified by Padilla et al. (1997)? How do Vietnamese-American students describe and explain their experiences at MWCC?*

In review, heuristic knowledge, as defined by Padilla (1991), is acquired through experience, not through textbooks. The learner acquires heuristic knowledge more rapidly with the assistance of a mentor, advisor, friend, counselor, or other individual who has experience with the local situation. It is important for the student to acquire this knowledge as soon as possible after arriving at a new college. This knowledge is important because it facilitates social and academic integration. Heuristic knowledge allows students to overcome barriers that may impede their development of theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom. Padilla et al. (1997) identified four categories of barriers encountered by minority students: (a) discontinuity barriers, (b) lack-of-nurturing barriers, (c) lack-of-presence barriers, and (d) resource barriers. As discussed in chapter two, each of these four barriers has two-to-five subcomponents. For review, Appendix F, tables F3 through F6, identify each barrier and its subcomponents. Each

table also indicates how the data suggested whether each participant has overcome the barrier subcomponents, if some or all of the barrier subcomponents are still present, or if a particular barrier subcomponent was not an issue or challenge to the student.

Chapter one provided an overview of my project. This overview described my researcher perspective, the purpose of my study, and the research questions that framed my study. Chapter two provided a review of the literature needed to understand the research on topics most relevant to my proposed study. I reported on the challenges faced by Asian-American students, a description of the Myth of the Model Minority, and its implications for Asian-American students. I also reported on Padilla's (1991, 1994, 1997, 1999) work with minority students. Chapter three explained my research design, indicating why I have chosen qualitative research and the narrative approach. The discussion also included the details of my methodology, including a description of my study site, how I selected my participants, and how I collected and analyzed the data that I acquired. I also discussed the issues of ethics and trustworthiness involved in my study.

Chapter four will review the description of the study site and will introduce the reader to the characteristics of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. This will be followed by a discussion of the personal characteristics of my research participants such as age, gender, educational background and major, along with the educational background of each participant's parents. Each participant had his or her own unique story to tell. These stories are discussed individually in chapter four.

As part of the interview and analysis process, my participants discussed the barriers they faced while at MWCC. As a final part of the analysis, I examined how the barriers discussed by my participants coincided with the four barriers presented by

Padilla et al. (1997). This was not an intended process at the beginning of my project. Because each participant did experience some barriers while at MWCC, this process emerged as my analysis progressed. As a result, each story includes a within-case analysis of how each participant developed and used heuristic knowledge to address the four barriers outlined by Padilla et al. (1997). A cross-case discussion of how the students addressed the barriers precedes a concluding section.

Description of Study Site

MWCC is the largest of three colleges composing a comprehensive community college district in a midwestern state. The district, Heartland Community College District (HCCD, a pseudonym), serves a large geographic region of approximately 90 miles by 30 miles. A nine-member board of directors governs the district. The public elects the members of the board and each member represents one of nine regions. The district chancellor reports to the board of directors. Each college is lead by a president who reports to the district chancellor. Each college functions according to district policies and procedures. However, each is provided with enough autonomy to create its own culture and to respond to local community needs.

HCCD has an enrollment of approximately 7,000 credit students each semester. The FY05 total headcount was 11,223 (HCCD Institutional Research, 2005). Approximately 5,000 students attend MWCC each semester. The two sister colleges each have approximately 1,000 students each semester. The following demographic information is for the district because HCCD does not segment state-reported data according to each campus. HCCD has a credit student population that is 62 percent female and 46 percent full-time. The largest age group is 18 to 22 (41 percent), followed

by 23 to 26 and 27 to 30, each comprising 13 percent of the population. The credit enrollment for HCCD is 60.6 percent Arts and Sciences and 39.4 percent Career Education. The credit enrollment for MWCC is 54.4 percent Arts and Sciences and 45.6 percent Career Education. The largest Career Education program for HCCD is Health (Nursing and other Allied Health), which enrolls 23.4 percent of the Career Education population. This is followed by Agriculture at 8.0 percent and Business at 7.1 percent (State Dept. of Education, December 2004 Report). Twelve percent of the district enrollment is composed of minority students (State Dept. of Education, December 2004 Report). Asian or Pacific Islander students comprise approximately 1.5 percent of the HCCD population (State Dept. of Education, December 2004 Report). The district does not segment out Vietnamese-American students from the Asian Pacific Islander group. An unofficial estimate of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC was completed through a query process. The ESL Director did this. This process indicated that approximately 0.7 percent of the MWCC population is Vietnamese-American. The Vietnamese-American population in the primary county of the MWCC service area is 0.76 percent. In that county, Lake County (a pseudonym), Vietnamese-Americans comprise 48 percent of the Asian population (US Census, 2000).

The size of MWCC made it a suitable college for this research project. The population of 5,000 students creates a large enough environment to be challenging for a student to navigate its systems and processes. Yet, it is also small enough to provide an atmosphere in which students can feel comfortable speaking to staff, faculty, and administrators and, therefore, feel comfortable talking to a researcher in an interview situation.

MWCC's students come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. The main campus of MWCC is situated in an area bounded by two small communities, Rolling Hills (pseudonym) and Deer Haven (pseudonym), which boast of their affluence, their high quality of education and city services. These communities are primarily residential with some light manufacturing and service businesses. Just west of these two communities is a much larger city, Lake City (pseudonym). Lake City is considered urban, with working-class, middle-class, and upper-class neighborhoods. This city provides the majority of the manufacturing, retail, and banking businesses for the region. Rural areas characterized as farmland, woodland, and prairie surround these three cities.

In addition to the main campus of MWCC, the college has a center in the downtown area of Lake City. The center provides GED and Basic Adult Education. Another center on the outskirts of the city provides courses involving manufacturing and advanced technology. The main campus and the downtown center are each situated near the banks of a large river. This river serves as a boundary for the state and thus the district.

Descriptive Characteristics of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC

Vietnamese-American students attending MWCC typically live in the western end of the college service area, primarily in Lake City. The Vietnamese-American population is composed of individuals who have been born in the United States, as well as individuals who have immigrated to the United States. MWCC's Vietnamese-American students are traditional-aged students recently graduated from high school plus older, non-traditional students. The traditional students typically attend one specific high school before transitioning to MWCC. Many Vietnamese-American students are

bilingual as a result of speaking Vietnamese inside the home and neighborhood and speaking English outside of the home, at school, and at other functions (ESL Director, personal communication, December 2004). These students often participate in English as a Second Language (ESL) in varying degrees at the high school, according to the MWCC ESL Director (personal communication, October, 2004).

Descriptive Characteristics of Research Participants

My participant selection process focused on Vietnamese-American students who were first generation immigrants or were born in the United States. By chance, all of my participants were born in Vietnam and had immigrated to the United States. Two of my participants were females and four were males. Two participants – Howie and Ba – had attended college in Vietnam. All of my participants were first generation college students. Two students indicated that their mothers had completed only elementary school. One student indicated that her mother had completed only middle school. Three indicated that their mothers had completed high school. One student indicated that his father had completed only elementary school. Two students indicated that their fathers had completed middle school, and three indicated that their fathers had completed high school. The number of siblings that each participant has ranges from two to eight. Four of the participants have siblings who are still in Vietnam, and two have all of their siblings living in the United States. The specific personal and cultural characteristics of the participants can be found in Table 1F, of Appendix F.

Four of the students were part-time, and two were full-time. With the exception of Nancy, all were currently enrolled at the time of the interviews. Nancy had already graduated from MWCC. Four students had completed three or more years of study at

MWCC. One had completed two years, and one student has completed one year at MWCC. Three students had been continually enrolled at MWCC, and three had stopped out for one or two years at a time. Two students were earning Associate of Arts (A.A.) degrees (Accounting, Liberal Arts) and were planning to transfer to a four-year college. Four students were earning Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees. Three of the four A.A.S. students were planning to transfer to a four-year university. They were majoring in Computer Science, Nursing, and Technical Studies. One student was planning to complete his A.A.S. degree in Auto Body Repair and did not have plans to study beyond that degree. The specific characteristics related to the education of the participants at MWCC can be found in Table 2F, in Appendix F.

My Participants' Stories

The primary purpose of my interviews was to learn about heuristic knowledge as part of my participants' college experiences. As a narrative study recounting the stories of my participants, I have chosen to divide each story into five sections. In the first section, I discuss my participant's personal background information. Since each of my participants was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States, this first section also includes a description of his or her journey to the United States and adaptation to his or her new environment. Next, in section two, I highlight how each individual has chosen to maintain connections to their culture. In the third section, I discuss each participant's experiences with students, instructors, and other employees at MWCC. Section four discusses my participant's perceived barriers and successes at MWCC. Section five includes a discussion of the heuristic knowledge developed by each participant.

The narratives of my participants reveal they were facing some or all of the barriers identified by Padilla et al. (1997). The final section of each story provides a summary and discussion indicating how, or if, each student encountered and overcame the four barriers identified by Padilla et al. (1997).

Within each barrier discussion, the corresponding subcomponents as identified by Padilla et al. (1997) are addressed in relation to each participant's experience at MWCC. As discussed in chapter two, each of these four barriers has two-to-five subcomponents. For review, Appendix F, Tables F3 through F6, identifies each barrier and its subcomponents. Each table indicates how the data suggested whether or not each participant has overcome the barrier subcomponents, if some or all of the barrier subcomponents are still present, or if a particular barrier subcomponent was not an issue or challenge to the student.

As I interviewed my participants, I worked to establish rapport and to find a comfortable level of communication. Each of my participants had a different level of skill with the English language, and I was patient in listening to their responses to my questions. It is important to recognize that my participants were not native-English speakers and sometimes struggled with language. As a result, their responses were not always as extensive as may be expected of native speakers. I have included the most important excerpts from their transcripts to share with the reader.

Van's Story

Van's background and journey to US.

Van is a very quiet and respectful individual. He was the first person to respond to my letter of invitation to participate in my study. His response, "I would be honored to

be of assistance,” was both exciting and motivating. Van has been in the US for 16 years. Van was quiet and reserved in his answers during the first half of interview number one. During the second half of the interview and also during the second interview, he was more relaxed and became more open in his responses to my questions. In both interviews, it was clear Van regarded me as a MWCC teacher and administrator, and he gave me special respect because of this.

Van is 39 years old; he is not married, although he has a girlfriend. He came to the United States with his mother, one younger sister, and one younger brother. Two older siblings stayed in Vietnam, and they are still there. Van lives with his mother and his two siblings. One week before the first interview, a niece arrived from Vietnam. She will be living with Van and his family and will be attending a local junior high school.

When Van first arrived in the US, he wanted to learn English, and he found out about non-credit English as a Second Language (ESL) at MWCC’s downtown center. He enrolled and completed the program but wanted to learn more. He learned about the credit program and decided to travel to the main campus to study ESL for credit. Van completed the credit ESL program and then started to take general education courses such as English Composition. He later progressed to computer programming classes. When Van talked about his first experiences with MWCC’s two centers, he said,

First of all, I went to study English at what they call Career Center. So I started at Level 1, 2, 3, and, after that, 4. So after that I still want to study more because sometimes I have a lot of trouble with understanding people. Or people have a hard time to understand me. So I come to here (MWCC main campus) for study and I found out here Midwestern Community College is very affordable. So I could take my time. I can study as much as I can from that point. So, eventually I just enjoy, you know, doing computer things. So, helping people, studying, and that is the best way to study computers is at Midwestern Community College because it’s, you

know, affordable. The Vietnamese do like to come here to study. Have a small school, with good teachers – to get started.

Higher education is very important to Van. He has earned an Associate of Applied Sciences degree in computer programming. He is almost finished with an Associate of Arts degree in pre-engineering. When Van completes his pre-engineering program, he plans to transfer to the local, private university.

Van would like to acquire a full-time job utilizing his computer skills, however he has not yet been successful. Van has been employed by MWCC as an adjunct instructor for three years. He hopes to continue working at MWCC until he can transfer or find a full-time job. He stated, “I just want to be a computer programmer. But looking for a job is very hard for me. I applied to many jobs anywhere around here, but no.” When I asked why he thinks this happens, he responded:

I don’t know. Because my Asian style, we don’t get hired. Maybe it is, racist? Every time my application is turned down. They call me to interview a lot – but, I don’t know why. I have a lot of skills. I don’t know what is missing.

When I asked about racism or prejudice at MWCC, Van wasn’t quite sure. His responses were mixed. Van felt that students might have racist feelings but not the teachers. Van attributed student racism to be the result of not understanding Vietnamese or Asians. He said, “It doesn’t matter what country you from – they only understand their views.” He noted that since Vietnamese-Americans tend to live in one region of the city, they are not a visible part of the population. Van noted, “People don’t tend to understand Vietnamese or Asian people. They don’t understand because Vietnamese in this area is concentrated in one place.”

Van's cultural connections.

As noted earlier, Van has been in the US for 16 years and has lived in Lake City for those 16 years. He has seen the population of Vietnamese-American in the city increase over this period. Van has strong ties to the local Vietnamese-American population, and he is well-known in the Vietnamese-American community. Van discussed how Vietnamese-Americans have migrated to one Roman Catholic Church in the community. The church responded to the Vietnamese-American community by hiring a Vietnamese-American priest. The church offers one mass each Sunday in Vietnamese. The church itself has become a hub of Vietnamese-American cultural activities, and Van's activities in the church have enabled him to interweave himself into the community.

Van is active in the cultural activities of the church and community. He has been involved in the planning of cultural activities and celebrations such as the Vietnamese New Year. This celebration brings all of the Vietnamese-Americans together and is an important force in the unification of the Vietnamese-American community.

Van discussed the close-knit nature of the Vietnamese-American community in relation to education. Most Vietnamese-American children attend one specific elementary school, junior high school, and high school. They go to these schools, Van said, "Because they can be together."

Van was sensitive to the challenges of adjusting to American society when public services are limited. He expressed concerns about transportation. Special busses that had provided transportation between schools have been discontinued. Van sees this as creating an added responsibility for older siblings since taking care of the younger

children is an important part of the Vietnamese culture. He is responsible for driving his niece to school in addition to his job and school schedule. "I have to drop her off. Before they have the bus. No more. Not now."

Culturally, Van sees himself as Vietnamese-American. He is an American citizen and feels a part of America, but he also has strong ties to his homeland and native culture. "For me, I am Vietnamese-American. Because I become a citizen of the United States. I have adapted, I feel that I am a part of America."

Van's experiences at MWCC.

Van talked about his experiences as a student at MWCC. These experiences included interactions with students, teachers, and staff at MWCC. As a new student, Van found he was on his own when it came to how to navigate the college systems and processes because there were no Vietnamese-American or Asian employees in the student services area. When asked how he found his way around the college, he replied, "By reading as much as I can. But, whenever I need to, I have to stay there and ask them in my very poor English."

When I asked whether having an employee who is Asian at MWCC would be helpful, he responded, "Yes. Because for me when I came here, I'm very afraid to go there to ask questions because they might not make understand me. So, I better not talk to them. I try to avoid if not necessary, because there is a communications problem." Van also feels that new students need more attention from staff to provide help in completing financial aid forms and other paperwork, stating, "For new people who come to MWCC because they don't know how to fill out the form for financial aid, still a barrier there. If someone knew it, done it, more comfortable to the student." As a result

of the lack of support for students like him, during his first semester he also relied on Vietnamese friends to show him around.

In ESL classes, Van found that instructors and students speak slowly, saying, "it's just generally mostly Asian people. So, they speak slowly. We listen slowly." In college transfer courses, Van had trouble understanding and keeping up with homework. He referred to his English composition class as an example. He said, "I take an English Comp I class, English writing for a real college level. I have a lot of trouble with understanding teacher."

After his first semester, Van was interested in working towards assimilating into the American culture, so he tried to meet American students. He still tries to meet new American friends both for learning the American culture and because American friends are helpful with studying. Van hangs around with American friends while at MWCC rather than Vietnamese-American friends. He visits his Vietnamese-American friends when he is away from MWCC: "I have Vietnamese-American friends but not for study." Since his social time is spent within the Vietnamese-American community, Van's assimilation into the local American community is limited.

Between classes on campus, Van often picked a room to study in and he talked to students who were there to get help. He explained,

I picked a room to study. To get along with whoever is there. And then I tried to explain what my situation is. I asked them to tell me things to study. Maybe you'd pick up something like learning terms. Also, I pick a couple friends and they are good friends to study. So, that is best. One hour, two hours a week. That helps with a lot with English. Sometimes I'm having problem with, you know, like, I'm having trouble to understand sometimes. What should I do when they ask me to do something? Sometimes I have to do something, and it is happening. What steps do I have to do?

Van has continued this practice, and every Saturday he also gets together with a friend who is from Spain. They talk about school and he can practice English, "Every Saturday I still have a couple of hours to study – to talk with friend of mine who used to be a class mate."

Van does not take part in MWCC social activities because he does not have enough time, explaining, "I have been taking care of family, so I don't have time. I just come in, study, have class, and go home." Van feels that younger Vietnamese-Americans have more time to relax and can do more activities, saying, "for younger people, it is better because they can relax. They can do a lot of things."

Van told me that a Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) on campus at MWCC would be a good thing. It would allow Vietnamese-Americans to meet each other, spend time together, and help with establishing identity. When I asked if he thought that Vietnamese-American students would join a Vietnamese Student Association club, he said:

Yes. We would do that. Because that is a Vietnamese advantage. So they can join and spend time. So, you know, like information sharing. I used to be in South Vietnamese association with Prairie View College. There other Midwestern students there. That was helpful.

Van's barriers and successes at MWCC.

Van identified four areas that were barriers to him in his experiences at MWCC. They were (a) language, (b) food, (c) the lack of Vietnamese-American employees at MWCC, and (d) transportation. Van said,

I think that language that's the most. Another one is food. It is a big challenge. If you want to be... taking care of myself, you have to prepare lunch every day. Also, for me, in the school Midwestern Community College, from my viewpoint is, I don't see any Vietnamese employees

there. Transportation is another. Very important. Because mostly we don't even know how to drive a car when we came here. It take a year or six months to get a driver's license. For me, it's six months. But we still need to work hard to get the money to buy the good car to go to school. So, it take a little while. Buses here are good but slow. Vietnamese, they don't know how the route is. What bus to get on. How to get there and how to pick up. How to drop off. Very difficult. If I look on the map in that level they don't understand. So, in order to go to school, they don't have the transportation. They don't know how to get a bus.

Van identified three successes that he experienced at MWCC. They were (a) learning his academics, (b) learning American culture, and (c) achieving better English skills. These have, overall, allowed Van to navigate his way through MWCC. "So, I tend to be more relaxed now," he claims.

Van's sources of heuristic knowledge.

Van started attending MWCC at the downtown center and then moved to the main campus. As a result, Van had two experiences with navigating through the college. Both times he had the help of the Vietnamese-American community. However, he still had feelings of being lost, especially on the main campus. The MWCC downtown-center director gave him the first connection to MWCC. The ESL Director at the MWCC main campus (both in class and out of class) was his second connection. Also, during his first semester at the main campus, he relied on Vietnamese-American friends who were MWCC graduates. He noted, "we have a big alliance of Vietnamese at Midwestern, they already graduate. So, the Vietnamese group helped to work my way through Midwestern. It take me one semester to learn, then I know the process."

Since his first semester on the main campus, Van has associated with American friends when at MWCC to practice English and to learn how to navigate the college processes. As I mentioned earlier, he talks to students in study rooms and asks for help

on what and how to study. Van also uses college services such as the writing center to help with his English skills. He has a friend he meets on Saturdays for a couple of hours. This friend helps him with his studying and with his English skills (speaking and listening).

Summary: Van.

Van's challenges have not been academics. His challenges have been non-academic barriers such as language, assimilation, relationships, perception, identity, and integration. These are experiences that occur both within the classroom and beyond the classroom. One barrier he has struggled to overcome is the English language. He worked his way through the levels of ESL to prepare himself for later studies.

In terms of Padilla's four barriers encountered by minority students, Van has encountered each one to some degree. He appears to be struggling with two barriers: discontinuity barriers and lack-of-presence barriers. He appears to have taken action to overcome the other two: lack-of-nurturing barriers and resource barriers.

An important factor in the discontinuity barrier is the transition from a familiar area to an unfamiliar one. For my participants, this transition is the transition from Vietnam to living in the US. Van has lived in the US for a long time and, on the surface appears to have made the transition from living in Vietnam to living in the US, although he holds to some Vietnamese values, such as being respectful to authority. This may make him appear meek and unassertive in the classroom or in an employment situation. When I asked Van how he views his ethnic identity, he said he sees himself as Vietnamese-American. This may be another indicator that he is struggling to transition to American culture.

Another discontinuity barrier is learning to be on one's own (Padilla et al., 1997). Van values education, but is he continuing his education to avoid getting a job? He lives with his extended family and does not appear to want to move out and create his own household. Van is active in the local Vietnamese-American population; this provides support for him but may also create some cultural isolation because socially he does not move out of that arena very often. As he noted, his American friends are for studying; his Vietnamese-American friends are for socializing.

Cultural isolation is also a factor in the lack-of-presence barrier. Van feels that students at MWCC do not understand Asians or Vietnamese-Americans, so they may not interact with them very often. Van took the initiative to ask American students questions in class and in study rooms, and this shows his attempts to overcome that barrier. Another aspect of cultural isolation cited by Van was the absence of Asian food in the MWCC cafeteria. As a result, some Vietnamese-Americans bring food from home to overcome this barrier. The lack of minority role models is also part of this barrier. MWCC did not have any Vietnamese-American or Asian employees in student services when Van arrived at MWCC.

The lack of minority support programs is another factor in the lack-of-presence barriers. Van noted that MWCC does not have a Vietnamese Student Association (VSA). He felt that this would provide a place for Vietnamese-Americans to come together on campus. Van relied on external sources, such as his church, for communication with other Vietnamese-Americans. It was not evident to me if Van was affected by the lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum. Van was in computer programming and then pre-engineering, topics that do not typically involve discussions concerning cultural

issues. He did not express concern about minority issues in those two majors. Van has overcome some of the lack-of-presence barriers, yet it is evident he stills feels like an outsider at MWCC because of the absence of Vietnamese-American employees and activities at MWCC. As a result, he has gone outside of the college to form his social connections.

In terms of the lack-of-nurturing barriers, Van did find support at MWCC by making positive connections with the Director of the downtown campus and with the ESL Director and his ESL instructors on the main campus. A second factor in this barrier is the lack of family support and understanding. Van lives with his mother and siblings, and he has a girl friend, but he may not receive much support from them. His mother did not complete school while in Vietnam: she is not familiar with or experienced in the college system in the US. Since he is the eldest sibling, he may provide more support and nurturing to his siblings than he receives from them.

The lack of minority role models is another factor in the lack-of-nurturing barrier. Since there are no Vietnamese-American employees at MWCC, Van's minority role models come from outside of MWCC. The last subcomponent of this barrier is lower expectations of the student by faculty or staff. Van did not indicate that faculty at MWCC had lower expectations of him. He discussed that they offer help to him, although he did not indicate that they had lower expectations.

The fourth barrier, the resource barrier, involves the financial aid system and the student's lack of money. Van noted that the financial aid system was a barrier to foreign students in general. He felt that foreign students do not understand the financial aid system, and they need help filling out forms. Van works many hours to overcome the

lack of money barrier. He works many hours each week to pay bills and support himself and his family. As a result, he cannot take part in social activities on campus. This may in turn contribute to his feelings of cultural isolation and his slower transition into the American culture.

In summary, Van has developed much of his heuristic knowledge from sources external to MWCC. These sources are Vietnamese-American friends who have attended MWCC, and also his connections with his church. He has utilized some internal sources, such as the ESL Director and his informal connections with students in study rooms and while working in the computer labs. He has also sought out assistance from other MWCC services such as the Writing Center.

Nancy's story

Nancy's background and journey to US.

Nancy is a vibrant and outgoing person. She is easy to talk to, and she is very comfortable in her lifestyle. Nancy is 46 years old, and she is married to an American. They have four children ranging in age from five to fifteen years. Nancy and her family do not live in Lake City where most Vietnamese-Americans live. They live in Rolling Hills, a smaller, adjacent residential city with a population that is primarily Caucasian. Therefore, many of Nancy's friends are Caucasian and American rather than Vietnamese-American, although she has ties to the local Vietnamese-American community.

Nancy also had a unique story to tell about her travels to the United States and her adaptations to her new life. Nancy's journey to the United States involved more than one step. Her entire family, except for one sister who was married, moved from Vietnam to Germany. She lived in Germany for two years, and then she came to the US by herself

when she was 23 years old, saying, “I wanted to come to America. My brother said ‘Why do you want to come to America? Is not safe. People shoot each other.’ He wasn’t happy that my parents let me go.”

When Nancy arrived in the United States, she stayed with a family friend. She worked in a restaurant as a waitress. This was a change for her. In Vietnam, her family had a maid, and Nancy did not cook or clean around the house. She was embarrassed, worried, and ashamed at first to be waiting tables at a restaurant. In Vietnam, only lower-class people work as waiters or waitresses. A waitress job or other lower-paying job is not viewed as an appropriate starter job as it is in the US. Nancy took non-credit ESL courses while working at the restaurant. She walked from the restaurant to school and back for two years.

Since Nancy arrived in the United States, she has usually worked full-time. She first attended MWCC as a part-time student, taking only one class. She took classes intermittently until she lost her job. At that time, she decided to go to school full-time to finish her accounting degree and to transfer to a local four-year college to complete her bachelor’s degree, also in accounting. During her time at MWCC, Nancy acquired a new full-time job and worked at that job while taking classes in the evenings and on weekends. She needed to do this because her husband’s health was not stable, and she feared a loss of health insurance for herself and her family. As a result, Nancy was a very motivated and driven college student.

Nancy’s cultural connections.

Nancy has lived in two cities since she came to the US: Lake City and Rolling Hills. She lived in Lake City for only three years before she married and moved into

neighboring Rolling Hills and into a community of native-born Caucasian Americans. Since Nancy is married to an American, and does not live in a Vietnamese-American community, she views this as an advantage; she feels that this situation forced her to improve her English speaking skills, stating, "I do believe that marrying an American, I do speak English at home. And I think that is an advantage for me."

Nancy has ties to the local Vietnamese-American community and mentioned she is fairly well known in the community, "Vietnamese people, many people know me because I have been here a long time." She believes that Vietnamese-American individuals need to learn to interact outside of the local Vietnamese-American community if they want to be successful in the United States. She stressed the need to improve English-speaking skills.

Nancy supports ESL classes as a starting point to learn speaking skills, but she believes that practice in the real world is a necessity to be able to develop high-level skills needed for working in the US. She tells other Vietnamese-Americans, "You may have to go to McDonald's to apply for a job. Work there six months to improve your English. You read English very well and understand everything about reading and writing, but speaking is a problem." Nancy says many Vietnamese-Americans do not want to work a low-wage service job, and that is a problem. Nancy feels that Vietnamese-Americans may have to accept less than they are used to in order to get established in the US. That puts a person in contact with the American public and is the best way to quickly improve speaking skills. Nancy stressed, "If you cannot communicate and if you cannot impress the potential employer, you cannot do much.

You have the language barrier. Communication is very important and I think Vietnamese students hold off on a lot of interaction with Americans.”

Nancy also feels that Vietnamese-Americans may not find jobs due to pride. She says, “I think the Vietnamese students don’t understand that. They don’t want to work something less because they feel they have a college degree. If you can’t get hired, just do something so that you can improve your English skills.” She gave the example of her own career. Nancy had a good job but lost it after “9-11”, due to lay-offs. She took a lesser job, but she knew she needed to do it to get more skills for another, better job. “It was tough. But, I had to put pride aside because I knew that if I want to make good money and to better myself I had to put my pride away.” She also feels that Vietnamese-Americans may be reluctant to take positions that require a great deal of speaking. They are afraid people may laugh at them. “I would tell them, ‘don’t be afraid. Go out and speak. Learn now because by the time that you graduate you should be able to speak English well’.”

Nancy is highly assimilated into the American culture. She credits this to two things. She lived with an American family when she first arrived in the US, and also she married an American man. When she first came to the US, she stayed with a family with children. That helped her learn English and American culture, she stated; “I learned English from the children who I stayed with at the time. They talked to me and I had to say something back and they just carry on conversation.”

Most of Nancy’s friends are Americans. When I asked if she sees herself as Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American, or American, Nancy stated, “I feel that I am one of Americans, although I am not White or Black.” While she considers herself to be

American, I noted that in her mind Americans are either White or Black. So, while Nancy appears to be fully assimilated into the American culture, she still sees herself as different from Americans.

When I asked about perceptions of racism or prejudice at MWCC, she did not feel that there were any experiences at the college that reflected racism or prejudice in the classroom or outside of the classroom. At MWCC, she felt that the instructors treated her equally with American students. She felt comfortable with other students. She attributed some of that to her age (she was an older, non-traditional student), and also she was working full-time. This allowed her to feel comfortable talking to anyone at the college.

Nancy's experiences at MWCC.

Nancy freely talked about her interactions with students, teachers, and staff at MWCC. At first, Nancy expressed that she did not feel involved at MWCC. She did not participate in any campus activities because she felt they were mostly for daytime students. Nancy noted, "I did not participate in any activities at MWCC; working full-time, having a family, going to school, trying to maintain good grades. I did not look for activities."

As I talked with Nancy, even though she did not feel that she was involved at MWCC, it became apparent that while she may not have been involved in formal activities, she had a fairly high level of informal social integration. Her social integration occurred primarily through talking to classmates on breaks. She was a non-traditional student, so she was older than many students and thus had their respect. Some of her younger classmates would ask her questions.

Also, in some courses, she participated in study groups. The students did not make any formal arrangements: "We just came in early and we started to form a group and study together and asking questions." They had a good time and Nancy misses going to school and being with friends. She also misses the social interaction that occurs when taking classes and the support it provides for the students.

Socially, Nancy rarely talked to other Vietnamese-American students while at MWCC because she did not want to speak in Vietnamese. She wanted to practice her English-speaking skills. She did not have any problems interacting with American students or with other students in the classrooms. She believes that Vietnamese-Americans should mix in with other students.

Overall, Nancy described positive experiences with her instructors at MWCC. She felt that faculty are knowledgeable and well-educated. She believes most of the instructors try to be connected to the students; faculty were available to provide help. "They understood that the people who go to evening classes are working people who want to better themselves; they don't give students slack, though. They reinforce the importance of studying, of doing homework, and turning it in on time." When I asked if faculty availability had encouraged her to stay at MWCC, her response was "Absolutely."

In her interactions with MWCC staff, Nancy found that most individuals were friendly although not always as helpful as she would have liked. She found the advising process and financial aid to be frustrating. She went to advisors who could not tell her what to take. They did not pay attention to what she was saying. All they wanted to do was to register her for classes. Nancy recalled, "As a non-traditional student, I don't have

a lot of support from the advisors. I learned from talking to people. I talk to people at work, with students on my bus, and take that and go further.”

For several semesters, she met with a different advisor each time she needed information. Finally, she was assigned to a faculty member in her discipline area. She had a very good experience with that advisor. When I asked what MWCC could do to help students in advising, she had two thoughts. First, she feels it would be beneficial if MWCC assigned a specific advisor to each student right when they first come to the college. This would provide a connection for the student, and the advisor could follow the student through his or her studies. I told Nancy that daytime students get an assigned advisor at MWCC, while evening students do not. This resulted in her feeling that the college was not providing consistent support, noting, “As a non-traditional student, maybe that’s why I fell through that loop hole? Things outside of classroom taught me what I needed to do.”

Her second thought related to whether or not an Asian or Vietnamese-American advisor would be beneficial. Nancy said she does not feel that this would be helpful in the long run, asserting, “We need to be able to speak to an American who can understand what we need and help us. It doesn’t make any difference whether Vietnamese advisor or American advisor as long as that person has the knowledge.”

Nancy did not have a good experience with financial aid, stating, “Nobody helped me with scholarship. I read the bulletin and I applied for it.” In this case, she felt that the staff members did not understand how to relate to non-traditional students. The staff did not appreciate the non-traditional students as mature adults who work and can handle their affairs but still have specific educational questions and needs.

Nancy's barriers and successes at MWCC.

Nancy identified three areas that were barriers to her in her experiences at MWCC. They were (a) language, (b) advisors, and (c) being able to get homework done. Nancy worked hard to gain the English skills that she has, stating that it was a tough job but necessary to be successful in the United States. Nancy felt she did not get consistent support from advisors, and she suggested some possible changes in the system at MWCC: "Assign advisor to a student; help student from the time he comes in. Follow him through."

Nancy's third challenge or barrier was more closely tied to her personal life than to any processes at MWCC. With children at home, a husband with health concerns, and full-time work, she needed to balance out her time, and she reflected, "I still to this day don't know how I did it. Going to school, working full time, having a family. I remember the greatest challenge was doing the homework." She felt pressure to provide what was needed for her children, and she also wanted to be a role model for her children, saying, "I realized that to teach my children to understand that no matter what you do, education is very important."

Nancy identified two successes that she experienced at MWCC. They were (a) learning the English language, and (b) learning the foundation knowledge needed for her future studies. These have, overall, allowed Nancy to assimilate into the local community.

I'm proud. I can speak two languages. Education is very important. My mother said that to me. Without education, you cannot do anything. The knowledge is always there. The knowledge I learned from the school, is awesome. So the greatest success I have with MWCC is I made a good decision to go there.

Nancy's sources of heuristic knowledge.

When Nancy entered the college and moved through semesters, her experience was similar to Van's although due to different circumstances. Since Nancy had taken ESL classes at the MWCC downtown center and had been working and using the English language, she was not afraid to speak to employees at the college. Her concerns arose because she was an evening and weekend student, and she was not receiving consistent information or support from the college. Nancy felt that she needed to learn about financial aid on her own; she read the bulletins to find a scholarship. She saw a variety of advisors who were not helpful to her until she was assigned to a faculty member who took time to help her. Nancy took the initiative to visit a local four-year institution to find out what courses she should take at MWCC for correct transfer. As a result, throughout her time at MWCC, Nancy relied on herself to develop her own heuristic knowledge.

Nancy discussed what she considered to be a very significant concern for Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. That is the need to inform them of the importance of getting practical experience with speaking English. Nancy felt strongly that if Vietnamese-American students do not do this, it will jeopardize their employment opportunities after they graduate. She suggested that such activities could be integrated into the ESL program.

I noted an additional interesting item concerning Nancy's role in developing heuristic knowledge. Since Nancy was an older, non-traditional student, younger students respected her and would ask for advice. Nancy found herself being the source of heuristic knowledge for others.

Summary: Nancy.

Nancy is well assimilated into the American culture. Like Van, she struggled with language, identity, perceptions, and adaptation, but her marriage to an American may have made her integration journey easier and shorter than the other participants. Nancy was also able to overcome her English language barrier by completing the ESL program. Nancy's experience of inconsistent support at MWCC caused her to seek out answers on her own and to develop her own heuristic knowledge.

In terms of Padilla's four barriers, Nancy successfully overcame three of the four. The one barrier that she struggled with was the resource barrier. Nancy had to work as a waitress when she first arrived in the US. That was a degrading experience for her, but she was determined to succeed and did the job as long as necessary. She wanted to build up her financial resources to attend college. This barrier was also partially resolved because she married and acquired some financial support. Still, Nancy sought financial assistance and found the financial aid system to be a barrier. For Nancy, the barrier arose not because she was Vietnamese-American, but because she was a non-traditional student and could not get the answers that she needed. Nancy had frustrations with the financial aid department such as filling out forms, getting approval of forms and getting information. She talked to the person in charge of the department to get her answers. Nancy did not fit the stereotypical image of the quiet Asian student.

Nancy identified and overcame the other three barriers identified by Padilla. The discontinuity barrier includes three factors: (a) the transition from Vietnam to the US, (b) learning to be on one's own, and (c) difficulty coming to terms with the value of a job vs. the value of education. These barriers were not an issue for Nancy. She was well

assimilated into the American culture by the time she attended MWCC. She was very independent and in charge of her family and her life. Nancy understood the value of education to improve her ability to get a good-paying job. She sees herself as American – although not White or Black. So, she may not feel completely comfortable with her American identity.

The lack-of-nurturing barrier was not an issue for Nancy. She did not suffer from a lack of family support and understanding. She had support from her husband to pursue her degree. He urged her to continue in her studies after earning her associate's degree, and he stayed home with the children while she took evening classes. Nancy did have one area where lack of nurturing was a concern. Nancy experienced difficulty in finding an advisor at MWCC. Eventually she did receive an advisor who helped her. The third factor in this barrier, lack of minority role models was not a factor for Nancy. Nancy did not have minority role models at MWCC, but she overcame that by deciding it was important to assimilate into American culture. Therefore, American role models were more important to her.

Nancy overcame the lack-of-presence barrier because of her strong assimilation into the American culture. The lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum was not a concern for Nancy. She was in the accounting program: this program focused primarily on numbers, calculations, and budgets, not social or cultural discussions. Nancy did not concern herself with the lack of minority role models and minority support programs because she was determined to learn English and succeed in the US and in the American culture. She was not looking for Vietnamese role models. Cultural isolation was not an issue for Nancy.

In summary, Nancy had overcome some of Padilla's barriers before she arrived at MWCC. She was married to an American, she lived in a Caucasian-American area of the city, and she had become friends with a number of Americans through work. Nancy relied on her resiliency to overcome those barriers that she did encounter. She persistently searched for the financial aid information that she needed. She continued to seek out an advisor. She talked to students in class to learn about MWCC processes and procedures.

Howie's story

Howie's background and journey to US.

Howie is a technical studies student at MWCC. He is 26 years old. He was very interested in taking part in this research project and telling his story about his experiences at MWCC. Howie works hard and is striving to make a better life for himself in the US. Howie's hands were very rough, dry, and stained with grease. Howie works two jobs: one as a semi-truck washer and the second as a construction worker. His clothing did not appear to be expensive, but it was neat. Howie came to both interviews wearing colored twill pants, long-sleeved shirts, and tennis shoes.

Howie spent his first two years at MWCC taking ESL classes. Then he moved into some of the general education requirements for the Construction Management program. Howie was enrolled in the Construction Management program for one year when the college closed the program due to low enrollment. As a result, he was moved into another program, and he completed his Associate of Applied Science degree as a student in the Technical Studies program.

Howie traveled to the United States by himself when he was 21 years old. His parents and four siblings remain in Vietnam. Howie came to Lake City and was assisted by the Federal Refugee Center. According to Howie, the center assists individuals arriving from various countries including Bosnia, Kosovo, and Vietnam. The center provides cash and food stamps for up to eight months and helps individuals find work. Howie worked at a turkey-processing plant and then at a clothing-manufacturing factory. He relied on others for rides to and from work, and he saved as much money as he could.

With these jobs, he was saving his money to buy a car and to go to college. Howie had attended the university in Vietnam but had not completed a degree. He was in engineering, but his move to the United States interrupted his studies. Howie feels there are more opportunities to attend college in the United States, stating, "Here [U.S.], if you graduate in high school, you can go college and university."

Howie values education and wanted to earn a degree before finding a full-time job. Even though Howie attended a university while living in Vietnam, he knew he would not be able to immediately enroll in college-level courses in the United States. So, he set up goals. Howie's first goal when he came to MWCC was to learn English. He stated, "When I first came here, I took English as a Second Language for speaking English and reading and listening to better my life." His second goal was to take classes in areas that he felt he could be successful in such as math and computers. These classes do not require a lot of English, and he noted, "that is something you do, but you don't talk too much." Then he could move on to classes in other subjects.

Howie's third goal was to acquire a contractor's license. He stated, "I have plan to get a license and work for myself, independent construction. I can do my own

business.” This will allow him to save money to go to the university. “That will make me money but not make me feeling good. I want to have an education, so I come back to school later.” He is unsure about how long he will need to work before he can go to a university, adding, “transfer to a four-year school, that be later, not know how long, can’t wait too long.”

Howie’s cultural connections.

Howie is a traditionalist in terms of his culture. He is proud of his Vietnamese culture and heritage, and he retains some traditional Vietnamese values. When he arrived for our second interview, Howie had a Vietnamese magazine with him published in his native language. He enjoys reading Vietnamese magazines and comic books when he can get them. When asked how he views himself – Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American, or American - he stated, “I think Vietnamese.” At the time of the two interviews Howie was not an American citizen, however he completed the citizenship requirements approximately one month after the second interview. Howie is now an American citizen. At the time of our interviews, however, he thought he would still see himself as Vietnamese after acquiring American citizenship. He feels that since he was an adult when he arrived in the US, he would maintain his identity as Vietnamese. He said, “After I become citizen, I still think Vietnamese. Because I grow up in Vietnam and then come here at 21 years old.” Howie feels that Vietnamese who arrive in the US at very young ages (eight or ten years old) or those who are born in the US to Vietnamese-American parents will view themselves as American.

Even though Howie feels he will maintain his Vietnamese identity, he is also trying to assimilate into American culture and society. As a result, he experiences some

ambiguity and he is not sure where he fits culturally. While at MWCC, he socializes with Americans. But he can't always understand their jokes, so he feels left out of the conversation, noting, "I come to school, I hang out with Americans. American students, but I cannot laugh with a friend. Sometimes you and friend talking and joking, but I don't understand." Howie noted that some English words (especially slang) might not have the same meaning when translated into Vietnamese: "Some words we don't have, and don't have same meaning. So the joke doesn't mean the same thing." As a result at MWCC, he explained, "So, free time, I do homework, and just relax or something." At work, he can talk to some people but usually only for instructions or assistance, rather than conversation.

During my conversations with Howie, other aspects of his traditional Vietnamese identity emerged. The first one involves language, the second relates to college choice for Vietnamese-Americans, and the third involves the role of parents and raising children. First, Howie values his native language; and, even though he wants to continue to improve his English skills, he feels that Vietnamese-Americans should maintain bilingual skills. He sees a struggle between parents who speak Vietnamese and their children who only want to speak English. He notes that older Vietnamese-American parents want their children to speak English but the parents may not be able to speak English with the children: "If the parents are old, they speak Vietnamese language. But the children grow up here, talk to brothers and sisters. They talk English. They speak both at home." If Vietnamese-Americans learn English, their parents may talk to them in Vietnamese, but they will answer the parents in English. Younger Vietnamese-American parents can

often speak English well and want their children to speak English. “The young parents speak English. They don’t speak Vietnamese. They want only to speak English.”

Howie also stated that younger Vietnamese-American students, those born in the United States, do not want to socialize with native-born Vietnamese-Americans. He said young Vietnamese-Americans, “that grow up here want to hang out with Americans. Not with us. I ask them why they avoid us, when we speaking somewhere, I don’t know.” He thinks it is because they do not speak Vietnamese much and would rather be speaking in English, adding, “If children come here at ten years old, now speaking Vietnamese is so hard for them.”

Howie feels that Vietnamese-Americans who are born in the US have decreasing connections to the Vietnamese language. He sees a slow evolution of Vietnamese-American families changing from speaking only Vietnamese, to speaking both Vietnamese and English, and eventually to speaking totally English. “The ones who have been here more than twenty years, they talk to their children in English rather than Vietnamese language. Children answer and use English only. They are relying more on English, the longer they have been here.” On one hand, he sees that as a good thing. On the other hand, however, he sees this as a loss.

In terms of the second element, college choice, Howie also sees a difference in older and younger Vietnamese-Americans. He believes those who learn English at a young age will not need to go to the community college, explaining, “If they pass through and graduate high school and speak English well, they will go study at the university.” Those who arrive in the US at older ages will need to attend the community college because of their need for ESL and need to stay close to home for jobs and family

connections. He stated, "If they coming from Vietnam, must take English as Second Language. They first must take two-year college here and transfer to State University (pseudonym)." However, Howie also mentioned that even some Vietnamese-American students with strong English skills may chose to attend community college because they want to stay close to home and may be able to get better jobs.

I have some friends; they don't want to transfer to State University. First, because of job. We have a job here, study, and work. If go to State University, they don't get good jobs. Also, it's a bigger school than here and a lot of student[s].

The third element of Howie's traditional Vietnamese identity involved the role of individuals in the family. He sees a difference between Americans and Vietnamese-Americans in their roles as parents. Howie feels that due to Vietnamese culture, once Vietnamese-Americans get married and have children, they can't go to school. They need to take care of their family. It is acceptable for Americans to go back to school after having children, whether the children are very young or when they are in grade school.

If Americans go to school, they can leave school and come back. But Asians don't think that way, because after we marry and have children, you cannot go to school, you have to take care of the children. If I was married and had kids I could not go back to school, that would be because of my culture. I would need to work to support my family. But American, have children 10 years old, they can go back to school.

As I mentioned earlier, Howie attended the university in Vietnam before moving to the US. Howie discussed differences between colleges in the US and Vietnam, and these differences were also connected to cultural differences. He discussed differences between instructors and their behavior and also the differences between how exams were given.

First, Howie indicated, that in Vietnam, the teacher is superior to students and is always right. Howie explained, "In Vietnam, if you are teacher, I can't say you wrong. In Vietnam, teacher is number one. He say right, that's right. (Laughs.) And I say, yes, that's right." There is a separation between instructor and student. "In Vietnam, if you are instructor and I am student, you are student. You are separate." The instructor in Vietnam does not give much assistance. "In Vietnam they expect you to do the work. You're the student and you do the work. And they will tell you if you are right or not." Howie discussed education in the United States by saying, "Here [MWCC] the students and instructors work more together. Instructors are friendly. They will work with you and help you learn it. You have freedom here if you say they are wrong."

Second, Howie discussed the differences in exams between the two countries. He finds multiple-choice exams to be a better form of testing for him due to his language. He can look for key words and make a decision, explaining, "Some classes have multiple choice, that's better for us because of reading. That's good for us. Writing in English is hard."

When I asked Howie about his feelings of racism or prejudice either at MWCC or in the community, he expressed mixed feelings. Howie said that he does not feel any racism or prejudice directed at him. He stated, "When I am at school here or at work, I don't feel like I am treated differently because I am Vietnamese." However when he discussed the Vietnamese-Americans as a population living in the US, he expressed feelings that Vietnamese-Americans in general may be limited in career choices and the ability to get jobs because of racial prejudice and language. When asked if he could continue his engineering studies in the US, he replied,

I don't think I can go. If you speak English as second language I don't think you can get to be a lawyer and business. I don't think it possible for the lawyer and the doctor. If you are American, how many percent can be lawyer? It's competitive to be a lawyer and only a few get to be at the top. If you have the language difficulty, it would be even harder to be successful.

In construction, that different. They look for skills. Skills, and don't have to talk a lot. So, I work with American guys and don't have trouble with language. I don't always speak well, but I can speak so they understand and I have good communication with them. But if I wanted to be a lawyer or something, it would be harder because you would have to be up in front of people. Or a doctor who would have to talk to a patient.

Howie's experiences at MWCC.

As Howie progressed through MWCC, he found the teachers, staff, and students to be helpful in general, but he also indicated some areas where he thought processes could have been structured to help Vietnamese-American or other foreign students more. In terms of instructors, Howie cited those instructors in his ESL classes: "Teachers in English as Second Language, they're there to help you, just speaking slow... and you can understand them. They spoke slower so you could understand." Yet, Howie seemed to be divided in his thoughts on ESL.

He appreciated the guidance that he received; but, on the other hand, he felt there were too many rules and too much structure. He also thought that the ESL Director holds students back from enrolling in non-ESL classes too long. He said, "If you take classes other than English as a Second Language, that can help your language because you are in a different class, different teacher, different subject and classmates. And you learn skills and you are practicing English."

Even though Howie thought that ESL students should be able to take non-ESL classes earlier in their program, he found the non-ESL classes to be very hard. While he noted that ESL instructors spoke slowly, he also indicated that instructors in non-ESL

classes often spoke too fast. Howie found that he had reading and writing problems, recalling, “When I get out of English as Second Language, it was so hard. The reading, how to read it and how to write it.” Howie expanded on his struggles with reading the material for his courses, saying, “The time I need to read and study is longer than you take because it take three or four times for me. I must translate it into my language. At first I look up words, but not much now.”

Howie expressed that many of his teachers were helpful, stating, “Teachers can be helpful, because they will talk slower in some spots, like the chapter or main focus they talk slow, and I need to know it, because that’s for in the test I need to pass.” Students would help him by taking notes. This was very helpful to him in the earlier years when he was struggling with his English skills.

In terms of relationships with students at MWCC, Howie indicated that he associates with American students. As I mentioned earlier, Howie perceives that younger Vietnamese-American students who have grown up in America do not want to talk to Vietnamese-American who were born in Vietnam. He also indicated that since his Technical Studies program was small, he was often the only Vietnamese-American student in the program. Thus, by default, he knew primarily American students. Howie noted that he couldn’t always understand their jokes, due to language difficulties. Howie tries to assimilate and integrate into the college culture but still feels like an “outsider.”

Since Howie traveled to the US on his own and did not have any family here to meet him, he was on his own to navigate his way to and through MWCC. He was able to rely on some help from new Vietnamese-American friends, but they had lives of their own and he could not rely on them too heavily. Howie found himself to be dependent on

others, not independent. In our conversations, while he described an overall positive experience at MWCC, it was evident that he could have used some assistance from the college. Vietnamese-American students may need a mechanism to assist with integration and assimilation. One present means of support for these students is the ESL Director and the ESL program at MWCC. Howie felt that the ESL Director is a good first contact. The ESL Director remained as his advisor after completing ESL classes.

Howie noted two other ways that MWCC could help Vietnamese-American students. Howie feels that MWCC needs one Vietnamese-American employee that would be visible to new students, and he says, "We need some help. It's a new country and new students. I think we need one person Vietnamese would help. They can translate, or help sign up for class."

Also, he felt that a Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) would be a good thing, noting, "If there was a group [VSA] to do activities together, that would be something that Vietnamese students would like. That would be a good thing." A student club like this may help with establishing identity. Howie described a similar group at the local four-year college and at one of the large state universities.

Even though Howie thinks that a VSA club may be helpful to Vietnamese-American students, he was not involved in activities at MWCC. "I don't have time for clubs, that's for the weekend. At MWCC I come to class and study." Howie's primary reason for not being involved at MWCC was due to the number of hours that he worked each week. He indicated, "I don't go to any school clubs or other functions, or plays or any of that stuff because I am busy working. I work the day on the weekend and weekly work at night." Howie claimed, "If I work less than 30 hours a week, it's not enough

money. Pay rent or insurance or food.” During a school semester, he would work 32 hours each week, but would increase that to 40 hours between semesters: “When I go to school, work two days for weekend and two nights on weekdays. When I am a student, I work 32 hours a week. Not in school, 40 hours.”

At the time of our first interview, Howie had one job, at the truck wash. The manager at that job allows him some flexibility to study for exams. At the time of our second interview, he had added a second job in construction, and stated, “Two weeks ago, I got a new job and been working, so I got both jobs. Working every day now.” He had decreased his hours at the truck wash, but overall, he was now working approximately 50 hours each week. Howie was very close to the end of the semester and his graduation from MWCC, so he was increasing his hours for the upcoming summer.

Howie's barriers and successes at MWCC.

Howie identified six areas that were barriers to him in his experiences at MWCC. Five of these were directly related to him and the sixth one was an observation of a barrier he perceived to exist for Vietnamese-Americans in the United States. The first five were (a) language, (b) note taking, (c) essay tests, (d) selection of a major, and (e) the different culture. The sixth area involved Howie's perception that many Vietnamese-American individuals, even those who develop strong language skills, will have difficulty acquiring high level, professional jobs in the United States. As a result, Howie sees language presenting a challenge for Vietnamese-Americans while in college and also after graduation.

In regard to his own language challenges, Howie discussed that he may have trouble understanding someone the first time he meets them. He said, “it is a different

culture and not my first language, and at first, I cannot understand you. At first, I had trouble when I go to McDonald's and order. They wouldn't understand what I say... I do better now." People may speak English too fast for him to understand. "When I talk to Americans, they talk fast and sound different." If he meets them more than just once, he added, "If you see the same person again and again and you talk to them a lot of times, then you understand their words better." Howie recounted a story about a situation at his truck-washing job. His status as a bilingual person was called on to help with a language situation at the truck wash.

Some truck drivers come from Canada. They talk both French and English. My manager ask me to translate. I say, translate? I don't speak French. (Both laugh.) That so funny! I did not speak French, but (both laugh) the boss expect me to talk to this guy in second language. (Both laugh.) I can speak slower English and I ask them slowly what they want. I speak a second language and I know how they feel.

Howie found note taking in class to be a challenge, again because of language. He stated that it is important for a Vietnamese-American student to get to know classmates and ask others in the class if they would be willing to loan their notes or to make copies. "If you don't tell somebody and nobody knows, then no one can help. I just come to class and just ask people. I can borrow their notes. Or I can copy after class and return to them." He noted that you cannot sit quietly and wait for someone to offer help: "If you come and sit quietly in class and don't ask anybody, you're going to be in trouble."

Howie noted that test taking at MWCC was difficult because it was hard to write essay tests, again because of the language barrier. He noted, "Multiple choice works better for us than essay."

Another barrier that Howie faced, once he completed ESL classes, was how to select classes and an appropriate major. This barrier, again, related to language skills. He considered taking classes in math, physics, and computers because they do not require a lot of talking. He expressed the same concern when discussing the selection of his major. He had considered computers for his major at first, because, "you do something, but you don't talk too much. So you don't have to be embarrassed or think about your language." He eventually decided on the Construction Management program because it is based on demonstration of technical skills more than on language.

As part of our discussion concerning selection of a major, Howie took the discussion to a broader level. He talked about his perception that Vietnamese-American immigrants may have a difficult time acquiring high-level jobs in the United States. His feeling is that they will still have an accent and may be discriminated against as a result. Howie feels that they may not be able to acquire jobs that require them to speak in public (such as a lawyer) or to speak with clients or patients (such as a doctor). This suggested that Howie believes Vietnamese-Americans need to make calculated decisions to accommodate language problems.

Howie identified three successes that he experienced at MWCC. They were (a) gaining English language skills, (b) gaining independence and improved self-confidence, and (c) gaining job skills. These have, overall, allowed Howie to assimilate into the local community. In terms of English skills and self-confidence, Howie said, "Now I can talk here by myself. So language has provided a lot more freedom to be able to go places. I can read a newspaper and now if you say something wrong, I know it. I have self-confidence."

Howie's third success was improved job skills. He explained, "You have skills you can use for a job and your thinking and you can do better in life. I will have a better job after going to MWCC than if I had just tried to find a job."

Howie's sources of heuristic knowledge.

In general, Howie's heuristic knowledge came from sources that were external to MWCC or sources that he developed as he progressed through the college. His relationship with the ESL Director was his only continuing interaction with college employees. Howie's ability to form his own connections demonstrated his desire for independence and his resiliency both as a student and as an individual.

As I noted earlier, when Howie first arrived in the United States, he relied on other Vietnamese-American friends for transportation to and from his first jobs. This discussion indicated how the local Vietnamese-American population is structured to help one another, especially the new members of the community. He also relied on them for rides to school until he could get his own vehicle. He explained, "We communicate and a person get you to school and guy at school you can tell him pick you up and what time go home. And share rides."

He also relied on Vietnamese-American friends who were students at MWCC to show him how to navigate the college processes. "Vietnamese friends told me how to do things. They had been in the area and students here. And they were students at the same time or before."

The ESL Director was the most important MWCC staff member to work with Howie. Howie noted that he gives assistance while students are in ESL classes as well as guidance on when students are ready to take classes outside of ESL. As Howie's

English skills improved and he gained more self-confidence, he was less dependent on the ESL Director and developed his own mechanisms for being successful at MWCC.

He talked to American students while at school to help improve his English but also to help him academically. He knew he would have trouble keeping up with notes presented in classes, so he was proactive in meeting students in his classes. This provided him with the means to ask students if he could borrow or copy their notes so he could study them later. In his Construction Management classes and at his jobs, he was aware of the importance of being part of a team. This again provided Howie with the structure that allowed him to acquire information that he may have missed or misunderstood due to language difficulties.

Summary: Howie.

Howie has assimilated into the American culture, but this has not been a total assimilation. He is struggling with his identity and holding onto traditional Vietnamese values. At the same time, he is proud to have taken the necessary steps to become an American citizen. He has struggled with language and has demonstrated that he is resourceful at finding ways to break down his language barrier. Yet his commitment to traditional values may be holding him back in terms of fully adapting to American life and culture. Howie is an individual who appears to make calculated decisions. As a result, his adaptation process may be slower than others in similar situations. He does not want to fail. Howie is observant of the world around him, and he has demonstrated that he is resilient and can create his own heuristic knowledge to achieve a goal.

In terms of Padilla's four barriers, Howie has overcome portions of each, yet he has struggles. The first barrier, discontinuity, was the most evident one in our

discussions. Howie has been able to learn how to live on his own, but he is not fully assimilated into the American culture. As a result, he may not yet be fully transitioned from Vietnam to the US. In terms of valuing his job over education, Howie said that he values education, and he wants to pursue a higher degree. However, Howie may be facing challenges that may take time to overcome.

In terms of the lack-of-nurturing barrier, Howie has looked outside of MWCC for his support. Since Howie does not have family in the US to support him, he has relied on friends. These friendships have been those he made within the local Vietnamese-American community and also those that he has made at his place of employment. Howie talked about some friends who have attended college in the US and their difficulties finding employment after college. As a result, it is not evident that Howie has met many positive Vietnamese-American individuals who have completed college and found jobs in their chosen discipline. Howie does not seem to have a role model that he can emulate. This may be contributing to his perception that Vietnamese-American individuals cannot hold professional positions in the US.

The challenges Howie faces within the lack-of-nurturing barriers also carry over into the lack-of-presence barriers. Again, in terms of minority role models, Howie did not find these at MWCC. Howie perceived some racial and cultural isolation while at MWCC. He noted that a Vietnamese Student Association would be helpful. He identified cultural isolation as an issue when he noted that younger Vietnamese-American students did not want to speak in Vietnamese but wanted to be more American. Howie did not discuss the lack of minority or cultural material in the curriculum. This may have been the result of his participation in a career technology program that is heavily focused

on skills for the workplace. His situation may have been similar to Nancy's: neither one of them was seeking cultural connections within the curriculum.

Howie supports himself, and, as a result, the resource barriers may strain him in regards to being able to afford to relocate and attend a university. Howie was able to overcome the resource barriers while at MWCC; he did not utilize the financial aid system, and he made enough money to support himself while at MWCC. Will he be able to overcome these barriers at a new level to be able to pursue education at a university? Will this become a challenge for him in the future?

In summary, Howie relied on his own developed sources of heuristic knowledge to navigate through MWCC. Since Howie relied primarily on his own sources of heuristic knowledge, this suggests the college does not provide adequate support to Vietnamese-American students. Howie seemed to be unaware of any support services for Vietnamese-American students. Howie would have liked to see Vietnamese-American employees at MWCC. Even though Howie had friends to talk to at MWCC, he appeared to be an outsider on the campus.

Ba's story

Ba's background and journey to US.

Ba is an individual who is enjoying everything he can about life. He is 46 years old and married. He is very respectful of his teachers and people of authority. As a result, he appears to be a quiet, unassuming man. When given the chance to discuss and express his ideas, however, he becomes a lively and vibrant individual. He enjoys talking with others, without any concern for age, gender, or ethnic background. He loves to

learn. He repeatedly mentioned how he appreciates that learning is a means of opening one's mind to new ideas and concepts.

Ba's mother, father, younger sister, and younger brother had arrived in the US before him. Since he was over 21 at the time of their emigration, he could not accompany his parents to the US. When his family first moved to Lake City, the climate was too cold for them. His mother got sick. The family moved to a warmer state. His mother died there after being only one year in the US. After this, his sister and father moved back to Lake City and the Midwest. His brother stayed in the warmer state.

Once his father was in the US for five years, he sponsored Ba to travel to the US. Ba was 36 when he came to the US, and he has been in the US for ten years. When he first came to the Midwest, he felt it was very boring and too cold in the winter. He was happy that his family had things prepared for him, but he was despondent for a time after he arrived in the US, recalling, "When I start the life here, very stress for me. I miss Vietnam a lot. When you come here, you don't have a friend. I feel alone. Nobody understands me. And I feel the world wanted to end."

Even though he had family here, he did not have friends to talk to. He went places but went by himself. He did not know where different places were – such as the library. As time went on, he found the library and things to read. He found appealing restaurants, and he found the mall. It took time to adapt, but now Ba feels that life is good and his future is bright, saying:

Right now, I feel very alive in America. I feel the life in America very good for everybody. I don't feel the feeling alone the same with the first year. I go to school. Very good for me because I have friends, I have everything. You look at the future very bright.

When he first arrived in the US, Ba worked in a restaurant for about four years. He needed to make money to support himself. After four years, he went to a local private two-year technical college to study in the medical assistant program. It was a short program, and his sister had completed it and recommended it. He thought it would be a way to earn money to attend college for nursing. But, Ba did not like the job and did not work as a medical assistant. He recounted, "After I finished, I have a job right away but I don't like my job too much. I have money, but not better. I come back with restaurant but I don't like too much my job." During that time he went to MWCC to learn more English. He added, "I decided, why not come back and study English. I go to college at MWCC. I want the university but tuition very high, very expensive for me and difficult when English not better, so I try community college."

First he went to the downtown center for ESL, and after trying the ESL in MWCC's downtown center, he decided that it was not for people who want to pursue academics: "Everybody tell me go downtown to study English. But I think, they don't teach you for academics. They teach you level very basic. How you communicate, when you go to store, you buy something or you see somebody." He then transferred to the main campus of MWCC. He took the TOEFL test and was able to start at the intermediate level. He took ESL classes until the ESL Director said he could take general education and nursing classes. Ba recalled, "I study ESL English for foreign language student before go to the Nursing program and I study about six months with ESL. After that I talk with ESL Director. He agreed for me take some class."

Ba discussed how he was unsure of himself at each new step in the educational process, but he found that he could accomplish his goals by taking one class at a time

until he entered the Nursing program. He said, "Sometimes I think, I must take every class. Psychology, sociology, biology, chemistry. Too many things. I want to leave school. But I work, and I finished almost all classes for the Nursing prerequisite in about two years." Ba was a nurse in Vietnam and one of his goals was to become a nurse in the United States. Ba said, "Before I come here, I am nurse in my country. I began the Nursing program. That seemed very difficult. My goal was to go on to Nursing license and have a job."

Ba recently graduated from MWCC with an associate of applied sciences degree in Nursing. Ba is a persistent and resilient individual. When he first arrived in the US, Ba wanted to go to the university to become a doctor, and he has not relinquished that dream. He wants to take classes that he can transfer to a four-year college and eventually attend a university to get a BSN and a BS in science or math, and then possibly graduate work or medical school. Ba described his goals, stating, "Right now, I study more for the bachelor of nursing. I want to take another degree, Bachelor of Science. I want to take the chemistry or math. That's what I want." Ba is motivated to continue his studies because he sees other family members attending college. He has a brother, a sister, and a nephew enrolled in universities. As a result, he wants to attend a university also.

Ba's brother is attending a university in the US and is almost finished. He also has a nephew in the US who is at a university. He wanted to start with general education classes first, but Ba told him to get at least one year of ESL. It would help him in the long run. His nephew did not want to at the time but now feels that it was a good choice. Ba's sister had gone to college by the time he arrived in the US. She went to college in another state and also at one of the local private colleges. She showed him around.

MWCC was very good for Ba, and he believes it is good for most foreign students. When he sees other Vietnamese-American individuals, he tells them to go to MWCC to improve their lives, and he expanded, "If I see Vietnamese, I say try to go to community college. They can do anything. Because many classes or courses for you. I think the community college system in America very good." Ba noted that Vietnamese-American students can stay closer to their families while attending the community college. It is less expensive than other schools. Students can learn English, gain credits, and then transfer to a larger university when they are more prepared. "The system, near your house. You don't need spend a lot of time in the campus. Take two-year basics. After that, you can transfer to university. They accept you."

Ba's cultural connections.

Ba is well assimilated into the American culture, but he also maintains ties to his Vietnamese culture. For both our interviews, his dress was very much American in appearance: a polo shirt, black jeans, tennis shoes, and a baseball-style hat. He is very happy to be in the United States and believes that the US has done a lot for him and has allowed him to improve his life. He attends the Catholic church that is attended by most Vietnamese-Americans in Lake City, and he has Vietnamese-American friends. His family is also very important to him. Ba sees himself as having multiple identities.

Ba sees himself as an American, although he notes that people who do not know him consider him to be Vietnamese when they talk to him. He explains, "When I come here, I am Vietnamese, and I think like Vietnamese. Now, I think about myself really as being an American." When he talks about his Vietnamese-American friends, he refers to

them as Vietnamese-American. Ba is now an American citizen. He is proud of his life in America and he considers himself to be successful.

Ba wants to do good things for the country because the country provides a good life for him and provides support for him. Ba expressed his feelings thus, "When you live in other country, that mean the country give you the life better. You must thank them and you must do anything good for that country. You don't do anything to damage the country you live in. Because in the future your children live here all their life." Ba believes that people should learn about the country that they move to, and they should socialize and learn from new people around them. He asserted, "You must study everything from the culture. Socialize for everybody around you because they open your mind more and they make you look at life better." He does not believe that people should stay within their own group; they need to expand their communications and work with all types of people to improve their communities and the country.

Ba does not feel that he has been a target of racism or prejudice since he came to the US. Some of this is because of his outlook on life. He knows that some uncomfortable things will happen to everyone, and says, "You must accept some things happen with you. Sometimes they don't tell you anything. They look you very strange, you know." When native-born Americans look at him strangely, he says it is because they do not understand about his country. So, he takes the initiative to talk to people, adding, "Usually I talk with them. In the future they know you more. They open with you more." He knows that everyone will not like him. Communication is a two-way street and needs to be open so that people understand each other.

Ba likes to talk about the differences between Vietnam and the US. He sees differences in the societies, and studying sociology and political science has helped him understand the differences better. As I stated earlier, Ba was a nurse in Vietnam. It was a low paying job. In the US, he works at a hospital and makes more money than he could in Vietnam. Ba said that in Vietnam, nurses only treat the physical problems of patients. They do not consider how the patient feels or what they are thinking. In the US, he learned about treating the entire individual: physical, mental, and emotional problems. He also says a nurse in the US also considers the culture of the patient.

Ba also noted that, in the US, after graduating from college and getting a job, most students live on their own. In Vietnam, most students live with their parents after graduating from college. They do not have a house; often they do not have a private bedroom. He thinks that younger Vietnamese-American students (ages 18 to 25) who come to the US or are born in the US are different than those who arrive when they are older (over 30). They are less tied to the Vietnamese culture. They are also more willing to ask for information if their parents have not attended college in the US. Ba noted, "Young Vietnamese compete with the American students. If they [Vietnamese] come young, or they born here, the language they don't have a problem. If the parent doesn't know too much, they ask somebody, they just go to friend or around." If a student's parents were born in the US, "they born in America they the first generation, they can tell you."

Older Vietnamese-American may have children, and they must work and cannot go to college. Ba feels that Vietnamese-American who come to the US after age 30 can get a good job, but they need to learn English first to be truly successful. He stated,

“When you come here over 30, the first step, if you want success in America. You come back school. Study English. Every day you must communicate English.”

Ba talked about Vietnamese-Americans who come to the US and only want to get a job and not learn English. They can get a job at a meat-packing plant, and they can make a good salary and get health insurance. He had a friend who worked five years in a plant before he decided that he wanted to learn English and go to college. Ba recalled, “He talk about after he work five year, he earn a lot money. He said he tired, you know. With job, he wanted to come back and he study English.” He took ESL, but it was too slow, and he only studied one year. Then the friend went to a cosmetology school to learn nail technology. Ba explained, “They can study a short amount of time, six months and then you get a certificate. Nail technicians don’t need too much English.” Ba felt this is a good option for some Vietnamese-Americans, saying, “You can earn very good money, and then Vietnamese own their own business. They rent in the mall. Some people very successful.”

Ba thinks it is getting easier for Vietnamese-Americans to adapt to the US because there are more Vietnamese-Americans in the US now than there were 10 years ago. He recalls, “When I come here in 1996, just about four or five Vietnamese students. When I come here, people not know.” He feels the local Vietnamese-American population is larger, they know more, and they can help people new to the country. He notes, “If they from my country, when they come here if they like go to school, they’re very easy because everybody know.” Specifically, in regards to MWCC, Ba indicated, “there are more Vietnamese now at MWCC. They can help you. There are more people who have experience now.”

Ba's experiences at MWCC.

As I noted earlier, Ba believes that the community college has been a very beneficial option for him. He was willing to discuss his experiences with students, faculty, and staff. Ba noted that advisors at MWCC were very helpful to him. They are able to show a person how to complete a program quickly; but they also know that if a student tries to move too fast, they may fail. They may not finish or they may have trouble in their work. So, the advisors give the incoming students a fair warning if they want to graduate too quickly. Ba notes, "They want you to go to right class. They have experience. They want you to be able to finish school. After you go out of school, you have a job and you are successful at the job."

Ba has found most people to be friendly and helpful to him, although many of the staff and students are not familiar with Vietnamese-Americans, and, as a result, they did not understand him very well at times. Ba expanded on this: "Some, like the ones who register you, and tuition payment secretary. Sometime they don't communication with Asian students. Sometimes they don't understand you. Your accent. The next time, she try – a little bit better." In other areas of the college, he did not have any concerns: "Go to library and everything very good."

When I asked about whether a Vietnamese-American employee would be beneficial for Vietnamese-American students who are arriving for the first time, Ba stated, "Yes. They could show you things before you finish with ESL class and what you expect the next step you want to do." Although, after some thought, Ba changed his mind, noting that many Vietnamese-Americans come to MWCC with a Vietnamese-American friend on their first visit. Sometimes that friend has been a student at MWCC

in the past or is a current student. Ba indicated that, “the Vietnamese, they know the students who study here already. So they have a friend that goes with them and helps them through the process. They ask about Financial Aid, what classes to take first before you have experience.” Ba related that this definitely happens if a student does not have strong English skills, stating, “If the first time you don’t know English, usually you meet a student before you come here. Usually they ask the student to go to school with them. Then they feel they have a group [of] people who understand them.”

Ba felt that the college gets new students into ESL, and these students get in touch with the ESL Director quickly, so that is a benefit. ESL classes at MWCC provided help with how to be successful in future classes. Ba believes, “When you study ESL, they teach you everything about English skill. This mean they teach you how to take good notes. How would you take the test. Reading for class.”

Ba indicated that instructors at MWCC are very helpful and supportive. Some instructors at MWCC, “talk very fast in class. You take notes difficult.” If he had questions, he indicated that, “the teachers were busy but they slowed down and helped with questions.” Other students helped Ba take notes because it was very difficult for him to keep up. They would also explain the notes to him.

Some of his nursing teachers would loan him books to help him understand better. At his nursing clinical sessions, students and the instructors were also willing to help him. Ba explained, “When I go to clinical, the students and instructor help. Sometimes I don’t have an instructor right beside me right away but I have the classmates, you ask them, they help you.” Ba said the teachers and students at MWCC did not seem to feel bothered by his questions. Overall, Ba related, “You don’t feel you are bothering people.

Because the school, you can ask anything. They can teach you. They don't feel anything is a bother."

Ba enjoys being with people. He socializes with other students outside of class at the college but not off-campus. He has people to socialize with at work but only at work. Ba was not involved in clubs at MWCC because of work obligations. He is involved in activities at his church and has friends at church. He attends the Catholic church in Lake City that many of the Vietnamese-Americans in the area attend. Ba feels as if he has good relations with people, indicating, "A number of places to visit with people, school, work, and church. Make me feel comfortable when I see the people. I know a lot of places. And they make my mind and my job better."

Ba noted differences between American students and Vietnamese-American students. American students are much more relaxed – but maybe too much. Vietnamese-American students have a high level of respect for teachers. American students do not respect their teachers as much as students do in Vietnam. Ba thinks they may have too much freedom. He cited examples of American students wearing hats in class or putting their shoes or boots on the table, saying, "The boot, the leg on the table they make me feel, what they call it too much freedom. Too casual maybe, too informal. Maybe take advantage of the situation. This means freedom." Even though this may give freedom to the student, Ba, who feels uncomfortable for teachers because, in his opinion, they are not given enough respect, states, "I feel not comfortable for teacher because in my country, respect the teacher." Ba has also noted that some American teachers are very strict while others have no rules at all. Ba feels that some American students study very hard, but others do not seem to care.

Ba indicated that in Vietnam students do not write as much as those in US, and most of the writing is for explaining or explication, as in an essay question on an exam. In American classes, he felt that students must communicate a lot in class and complete more complex writing assignments than in Vietnam and noted, "Right now, every class I take, at least have one or two writing paper. You must write many paper, three paper, four paper, five paper." People at work have helped him with writing. For example, the owner of the restaurant where he worked helped him with writing. He also used the MWCC writing center.

His first year of classes was very hard. He read the textbooks many times and often fell asleep because he was working, going to class, and studying. He could read only five pages in one hour. It was a very slow process, but he added, "Right now, compared with the first year, is better." Since he was a nurse in Vietnam, the science classes were not too hard, and he recounted, "Science easy, biology, chemistry, math. Very easy understand because I studied in my country." The other classes were very hard for him, though. He noted, "Psychology, sociology, literature, and everything. Oh! They were very abstract. I cannot understand. I cannot imagine what they tell me, but they open your mind."

He has observed that at MWCC, Vietnamese-American students tend to stay together; for example, they sit together in the cafeteria. They may sit together in class, and they often do not say much in class. Ba expressed his concern about this, saying, "The Vietnamese student. Every time I go to cafeteria, they stay in a group with Vietnamese. This mean they stay together. When you want to live in a country, you must study the culture. You cannot stay in a group." He continued by saying, "If you go

to only that group, you don't know anyone around you. You should socialize with everybody around you. They open your mind more and they make you look at life better. You understand people more."

Ba's barriers and successes at MWCC.

Ba identified three areas that were barriers to him in his experiences at MWCC. They were (a) English language skills, (b) terminology in subjects he was not familiar with, and (c) writing assignments. When he was discussing his perceived barriers, he stated, "When I go MWCC, I think, I am nurse already, easy for me when go into Nursing program. But very difficult. Because English is a barrier first for me. If you don't understand, how can the life here better?"

In regards to terminology in classes, he noted, "Every major, every course, they have own terminology you must study. When you study psychology, economics many word different. Right now, I study with philosophy. Oh, difficult! [Both laugh.] They open your mind very good. They open my mind."

When Ba was asked if he thinks it is more difficult for Vietnamese-Americans to learn terminology than for the American students, he replied, "Yes. Americans, they hear, they understand right away. But me, I must translate in my country some words. When I hear a word that I haven't heard before – I translate it into Vietnamese first and then learn it."

When asked if there were any other barriers besides language and terminology, he mentioned writing. He feels that the type of writing done in American classes is more complex than the writing done in Vietnamese classes. He indicated, "I think, many things about barriers. This mean, I think, writing. Every class in my country, the teacher

don't need you writing too much. And right now, I take every class. At least you have one or two writing paper."

Ba identified six successes that he experienced at MWCC. They were (a) improving his life, (b) meeting new people, (c) learning English, (d) learning new subjects to help him understand and appreciate the world better, (e) improving confidence, and (f) learning how to study for classes in the US. These have, overall, allowed Ba to assimilate into the local community.

When asked about his successes and if improving his life was number one, he said, "Yes. It make the life open more. Right now I can appreciate more things outside of just working. And to meet people." Other successes were, "English. You feel confident when you improve your English. You understand the world more. When you go to school again and you know a language, you can hear on the radio, TV, the news everything."

Ba's sources of heuristic knowledge.

During the interview process, it was obvious that Ba was determined to find his way through life and was capable of calling on resources around him as needed. His heuristic knowledge sources can be clustered into four groups. These four groups are (a) his family, (b) his friends in the Vietnamese-American community, (c) friends at work, and (d) staff and advisors at MWCC.

Since Ba's family was in the United States before he was, they were an important source of heuristic knowledge. Ba's sister was his primary helper and primary source of heuristic knowledge when he first arrived. When asked how he worked his way through MWCC to find the correct type of ESL and information, he replied:

My sister picked out everything before I come here because she living here some years and she know how to do. She asked about the place in downtown they call it Career Center. And I go to downtown. That's where I go to study but I study just one week. I think, the English very simple, very basic. I asked my teacher and my sister. My sister thought, you must go MWCC main campus.

Ba also discussed how many Vietnamese-Americans go to MWCC for the first time with a Vietnamese-American friend who knows the college. The friend helps them through admissions, financial aid, and registration. Ba used his own experience as an example, stating, "When I come here, somebody before me, the Vietnamese, they told me if you want to go to MWCC, how to do it." Furthermore, once they are on campus, Vietnamese-American students will also ask other Vietnamese-American students for assistance.

Ba was resourceful in seeking out assistance with his academic work. He used the college services to assist with academics: for example, the writing center. He relied on friends at work to give assistance. His fellow students on campus and at clinical sites were willing to help him with his questions. Also, the restaurant owner where he worked was a college graduate and offered assistance to Ba. He said, "When I worked in the restaurant, the owner of restaurant is American and he very good because he have a four-year degree already."

Ba relied on the ESL Director for advice when he first arrived at MWCC. Even though he could, and did, talk to other students, Ba felt that the best information would come from his advisor: "But you still depend with your advisor. They show you experience." Ba explained that the ESL Director monitors students' progress in ESL and lets them know when they are ready to take classes outside of the ESL program. He said, "You must see him (ESL Director). At least during two years of ESL. When you take

General Education, you still see him. See him and ask what class you need to take, you know.” When he was ready to take Nursing program classes, it was necessary to switch to a nursing advisor. Ba recounted, “When I go to the Nursing program, he [ESL Director] tell me, right now I cannot do anything for you. You must go to nursing teacher, because it’s so specialized.”

Summary: Ba.

Like Nancy, Ba is well assimilated into the American culture. He has struggled with language, identity, perceptions, and adaptation, but it appears that he had more family support than the other participants. Still, Ba’s adaptation process may also have been somewhat more difficult because of his arrival in the United States at an older age than the other participants. Ba is a mature adult and observes many things going on around him. He is a person who reflects on life’s experiences and the opportunities he has been given. He is also willing to take advantage of opportunities that are available to him.

Examination of Padilla’s barriers reveals an individual who has either overcome the barriers or did not actually need to address the barrier. Ba has been able to overcome the discontinuity barriers. He sees himself as an American and enjoys his life in America, indicating that he has undergone the transition from Vietnam to the US. He and his wife provide for themselves, so he has learned to live on his own. Ba demonstrated that he values education, and he has put his education first before his employment, and he wants to continue his education.

Padilla’s lack-of-nurturing barriers did not exist for Ba. Since he had family members in the US before he arrived, they assisted him and supported him from the first

day he arrived in the country. He had positive relationships with his instructors, and he did not lack for minority role models because his siblings had attended college in the US and had been successful. The lack-of-presence barrier was also not an issue for Ba. He wanted to assimilate into the American culture, so he was not seeking minority issues in the curriculum. He relied on his own experiences in Vietnam to compare to American culture in courses such as sociology and psychology. Since Ba was a nursing student, he was more concerned with learning medical knowledge than learning about minority issues. Ba has dealt with cultural isolation by attending the local church that most Vietnamese-American individuals attend.

The presence of his family in the US also helped Ba to overcome the resource barriers. He had financial support when he first arrived, and his sister was able to help with navigating the financial aid system.

In summary, Ba has been able to apply his positive attitude and his motivation to create a life that he can enjoy. He was fortunate to have the support of his family when he arrived in the US, but he has also been willing to learn on his own how to navigate the processes of MWCC. As a nursing student, he has managed to succeed in a program that is demanding and often too challenging and overwhelming for many other students, including many native English speakers.

Yumiko's story

Yumiko's background and journey to US.

Yumiko is 21 years old and was the youngest participant in my project. At our first meeting, she appeared to be very shy, quiet, and respectful. In the first part of the interview process, she provided very short answers to questions, but she soon became

more comfortable and provided more detailed answers to my questions. As we talked, it became evident that Yumiko has been able to adapt very well to the American culture, and she is finding new things to learn every day.

Yumiko came to United States when she was 17. She has been in the country for four years. She came to the US with her parents. Her family lived with her aunt (her father's sister) for one week and then the family moved to their own home. Yumiko's aunt had sponsored them to provide the immigration approval. Yumiko has two siblings, but they remained in Vietnam. One is three years older than she is, and the other is eight years older. At the time when Yumiko and her parents left Vietnam, her siblings were not allowed to leave the country with their family since both of them were over the age of 21. They need to apply for immigration approval on their own. Yumiko's parents are hoping to sponsor them sometime in the future.

I came here four years ago. Because my aunt, the sister of my father lives here. I came here with my parents. My sister and brother were too old and they couldn't come with us. I think they want to come to the US, but they still waiting for...their own papers, to get their own approval. We lived with my aunt for just like for a week and then moved out. I live with my parents.

Yumiko attended high school for one year after she arrived in Lake City. She attended Pearl High School in the western side of the city where most of the local Vietnamese-Americans are enrolled. She took ESL there during that one year. This was not her first exposure to English. While living in Vietnam, she had six years of English. When she first arrived in the US, she had a very difficult time understanding people. She found that the accent is not the same as she had heard in her English classes in Vietnam. She claimed, "The first time I got here, I couldn't understand anything. Because the accent is totally different. It take time. And you know is really hard to communicate with

a different language, different culture. Not the same background, you know.” Yumiko noted that in English classes in Vietnam, the emphasis is on writing and grammar rather than speaking and listening.

Yumiko also felt that it is very hard to come to the US as a teenager because American teenagers use slang terms that are not taught in English classes in Vietnam. She noted, “Especially the teenager that usually speaks the English language and slang, you have no clue what they are talking about. I’m not sure what they’re talking about, you know.” This creates a communication gap that must be overcome if a person wants to fit in and feel as if they belong in their school or in society in general.

During her one year in the local American high school, the ESL Director from MWCC visited the high school and administered the TOEFL exam to non-native English speakers. He was Yumiko’s first connection with MWCC. His visit helped her decide to attend MWCC. MWCC was her first experience in college since she was too young to attend college in Vietnam. Yumiko felt that MWCC was a good place for her and others to start, stating, “People go to MWCC, go to community college because is cheaper. They can use that credit to transfer to other universities. So I think it’s better, they can get used to the environment first. Before they step up to university.” Yumiko also noted that she was able to stay with her parents and could practice English, both in ESL classes and other college classes.

Yumiko went to MWCC for general education classes and to major in business. She took ESL classes, although she looked at those as secondary (a required step) to her Associate of Arts classes. She had scored fairly high on her TOEFL exam. As a result, after two semesters of ESL, she was able to take a combination of ESL and college

transfer classes. Currently, she is taking only college-transfer classes, and she is doing very well. Yumiko is a very motivated student. She has a long-term goal of transferring to a university and possibly pursuing medicine. Yumiko discussed her plans for future studies, saying:

I will get my Associates degree, and here is close by my parents, so – you know that first step is easy for you if you stay with your parents, you know, in your own environment. If I go to State University, I will be very awkward. I don't really feel uncomfortable when I'm here. A lot of people say here is community college; if you're a good student you're not supposed to come to community college. I think, no. I think MWCC is fine. It offer you a lot of opportunities. But is a good way to start. I can get a bachelor's of business first and then I would get my master's in something else. Because in the medical field they say it doesn't matter what kind of bachelor you have, you still can get into the program that you're interested in.

Yumiko's cultural connections.

Family is important for Yumiko. She is the only child here (in the U.S.) to support and help her parents. She is glad that she does not have younger siblings at home because she would need to take care of them. In Vietnamese families, the older sibling often plays a major role in caring for the younger siblings. She was born in Vietnam but is Chinese, noting, "Actually, I'm Chinese. But, I was born in Vietnam." She stated that she lives culturally in three worlds – Vietnamese, Chinese, and American. Yumiko identifies herself as Chinese, more than Vietnamese. She also thinks of her identity depending on whom she is with at the time: "If with my family I think I'm Chinese; when I hang out with Vietnamese friends, I talk Vietnamese. When I hang out with Vietnamese people, they think I'm Vietnamese because my Vietnamese a lot better than my Chinese." She speaks Chinese with her Chinese friends. When she is with Americans, she speaks English. She does not consider herself to be American even

though she lives in the culture and enjoys learning about the American culture. She enjoys experiencing the three cultures, stating, "It is three worlds because I am Chinese. Each world is interesting. I like it though. I have learned many different things from each culture." When asked if it is difficult to live in multiple cultural worlds, she stated,

I don't think so because at home you still do your own culture. You speak with your parents. But when you go out, you have a chance to improve your knowledge. You can open your eyes and say, "oh that's different". You know, I don't know that and that's when you learn because you don't want to stay back from a society.

Yumiko also speaks Cantonese and a bit of Mandarin along with Vietnamese and English. Her American-born Vietnamese friends speak English more than Vietnamese. She wants to practice her English, so she speaks English as much as possible.

When asked about her food preferences, Yumiko prefers Vietnamese food to American food. She does not bring her own Vietnamese food to school but often goes off campus to eat. "I prefer Vietnamese food. I know like some colleges would serve Chinese food." Yumiko did not face one of the common challenges for Vietnamese-Americans first arriving in the United States: that challenge is transportation. She had a car available to use as soon as she could get her driver's license; having family already in the US helps with transportation.

Yumiko is not an American citizen yet. She needs one more year in the United States before she can apply for citizenship. Yumiko lives in Vietnamese-Chinese culture at home, and American culture at school and work. Her parents are maintaining their Vietnamese-Chinese culture, but they are trying to learn English. Yumiko stated, "They hold our culture and they try to learn some English. They want to be American citizens because they want to sponsor my sister and brother to come over here. That is why they

want to be American citizens.” Yumiko’s parents do not have time to go to school for ESL because they both work, so they are trying to learn English on their own by watching movies, reading books and newspapers. Since Vietnamese culture puts family and home duties first, their primary focus is to provide resources for Yumiko to go to school.

Yumiko is somewhat undecided about her transfer college. She wonders if it would be better for her to go to the local, private, college because her parents’ English is not very strong yet. She is often their connection to the English-speaking world.

Yumiko added, “Prairie View College is close my house. I would like to go somewhere else, but my parents are here, they don’t know how to speak English so I think it is better for me to stay here with them.” But Yumiko also wants independence: to learn new things like cooking for herself, and taking care of her own place. She states, “I think I want to try some college life. I want to learn something new, and more independence.” Thus, she would like to be farther from home. One state university is one hour away; another is three hours away. She would prefer the one that is three hours away, but she is wrestling with whether that would be too far away. She stated, “I think I could go to State University because I can come home like every week or every two weeks. State College (a pseudonym), it takes like three hours driving. I have to do my homework and my school stuff.” In Vietnam, people stay with their parents into their 20s, and often even after they are married. She thinks her parents want her to move out and try new things – to be more American. She sees herself eventually living with her parents again after graduation from a university, saying, “I think my parents want me to move out and

try a new life and see how it works. But I will come back. I don't want to go forever. I would come back and stay with them."

Eventually, her parents want to move to an area of the United States with a climate similar to that of Vietnam. Yumiko said, "I like the winters, but I think it is too cold for my parents, because Vietnam is a tropical country and is really hot. My mom wants to go somewhere that have more Asian people and she can talk to." They talk about Hawaii. They have relatives there, and, once again, family is important. At the time of our second interview, Yumiko was looking forward to her upcoming trip to Vietnam for her sister's wedding. Her parents and aunt were also traveling. She was hoping to go to Thailand if she had enough money.

Yumiko told me that she felt it would be difficult to try to study the experiences of Vietnamese immigrants who come to the United States. She feels that each Vietnamese person comes to the US with a different situation – as an individual, with a family, maybe as a refugee, or they may have married someone in order to get to the US. Many of them need to work before going to school. Yumiko expanded her thoughts, saying,

When they just get here, they don't have any money to pay tuition, they don't know about financial aid. A lot Vietnamese people come here with different situation. Like a lot of people like refugee. And a lot of people marry to come here or they have a family to sponsor coming over here. So maybe they come here and work and make money. A lot of people do that. They go to work first. And some people, they thinking about the future. They want to go to college to get a better life later on, so maybe they think about college. A lot of people want to study here and they don't have a green card or they don't have a Social Security number. They're not qualified to apply for financial aid if they don't have a Social Security number. A lot of Vietnamese people don't really care about education. They work a lot and then they save a lot of money and then they open their own business, so they run their own business. So, they

say, "I'm a boss." Without education they still can make a lot of money. So, it just depends. Everybody is different, and have different thinking.

She thinks that students who have just arrived in the US may be afraid to go to college because of the tuition, stating, "I think the most afraid is about tuition." They do not have money and they do not understand financial aid. She also thinks that Vietnamese who have just arrived in US are hesitant to speak English because they are afraid people will laugh at them – so it is hard for them to "come out of the box and to express themselves." If they do not have Vietnamese-American friends who can help them make connections to the college, they may not take advantage of ESL classes. As a result, they may have difficulty assimilating into the American culture.

When I asked about her perceptions of feelings of racism or prejudice, she stated that she feels some racism or prejudice but not a large or significant feeling. She perceives the cause to be due to a lack of understanding of her culture and of her English. Once students know her, they are friendlier and more open in communication.

Some students are very nice and try to be nice to you but some, like they have a little, like racial thinking. You're not American. You're not white. Usually, white people have a racial thing. Just the white people. They are laughing at your English. I think just small comments like maybe they think you are not American and maybe they want to understand you but they can't because of your English. And you feel a little bit awkward. I think it just takes time. It takes time to get used to it. So, I think they would be fine. And you know is really hard to communicate with a different language, different culture. Not the same background.

Yumiko's experiences at MWCC.

At MWCC, Yumiko has learned a lot and has met many friends. She has enjoyed learning about college life in the United States. She stated, "I've learned a lot that I don't know before. And I know a lot of friends. And, I know how the college life is supposed to be." In her discussions of her experiences at MWCC, she talked about the differences

between Vietnamese and American schools, her inability to attend extracurricular activities because of the need to work, and the difficulties experienced by new foreign students.

When Yumiko compared Vietnamese and American schools, she focused on three differences: the assignment of classes, the method of teaching, and the methods of assessment. In Vietnamese schools, students stay in one room, and the teachers come and go, and “the classes picked for you.” In Vietnam, the teacher provides information and the student learns it. In the United States, Yumiko observed, “I think studying here is more independent. You have to do it by your own. You have to do research.” Yumiko learned that studying in small groups outside of class was very helpful, noting, “A study group with other students outside of class has really helped. I think study group is better depending on the subject. Like math, you don’t have to but biology that you need to memorize a lot of terminology, yes.” She used the computer lab and the writing center. She received help with her grammar in the writing center. Yumiko felt that American instructors are more helpful; they will slow down if they are asked to.

When asked about exams, at first Yumiko said she prefers multiple choice exam questions to essay, noting, “In Vietnam, we don’t have a lot of multiple choice questions. We usually have only essay questions. But multiple choice work better.” Later, she changed her mind, saying, “Essay questions is also good because in multiple questions you have four answers so that means you have only 25 percent to get it right. So, it just depends.” She feels that if a student’s English writing is good enough, “as long as you study for the essay questions and you can write out some main points, you still get some

point for that.” This indicated to me that she is fairly comfortable with her English language skills.

Yumiko is not involved in extracurricular college activities outside of classes. At first, Yumiko did not think she used college services very much, but she found that she used many of the academic services. She spends time outside of class involved in activities such as going to the writing center and the computer lab and attending study groups. She is working two jobs, and she is usually taking a full-time class load. She typically works around 15 total hours each week, sometimes more if necessary, saying, “It just depends because sometimes they need you and you have to work more than that.” One job is at the local casino, and the other is at a retail store selling technology items.

Yumiko feels that students who are new to the college and have limited English skills need a connection to help them. When I asked if she feels that the ESL Director or a Vietnamese-American employee in student services would be able to make that connection, she replied, “Absolutely. Maybe they don’t even know how to speak English. And really need help.” She felt that a current MWCC student who is Vietnamese-American could be a good connection for Vietnamese-American students at the local high school, saying,

Maybe they try to make a connection between the English environment and the student who just got here and doesn’t know how to do. Maybe they have a lot of question and you can answer the question for them. You can send somebody who already experience it and is already in college.

They could talk about their experiences at MWCC, how to apply, register, and complete financial aid paperwork, and how to get around the college. Yumiko preferred the idea of a current student visiting the high school because the ESL Director, when he visits the local high school, is respected but is seen as an authority. She noted, “I think he (ESL

Director) give a test and, of course, he want you come to school, but they may see him (ESL Director) as a different person.” A current student may make an easier connection with the high school students.

In terms of advising, the ESL Director is her original and current advisor. She maintained him as her advisor after she completed ESL even though she could switch to a business advisor, saying, “He answers all the questions that I have and he gives me some good advice. What I should do. He knows a lot of different cultures.”

When I asked Yumiko what type of activities would be helpful to new Vietnamese-American students, she said that a Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) or an international club would be beneficial. I asked whether one type of club would be more beneficial, and her response to my question was “I think it’s better to have the International Club, then other people can understand each other and they can get used to the environment first. It just depend how many Vietnamese people you have.” This would help students get used to the college environment and to learn about and share cultures – “and food!” (laughs). Yumiko noted that in Vietnam, they have American-Vietnamese clubs. English is the only language allowed there and it provides a way to practice English; “You have to speak in English. I think that is very good idea. I think is a good opportunity to practice English and also to know new people.” She suggested that this type of club may be helpful to have in the United States; either at the college, or in the community. Yumiko explained, “If you have a club and you have people stay together and they will, you know, help each other. All the people – all the minority can stay together and try to talk.” Yumiko suggested that the college could use this club to provide information to new students, saying,

Send some American people who are working here [MWCC] or someone who is a student here. Maybe a student who is a Vietnamese student here but has been here for a semester or two can talk about... what it's like here. And they try to talk to them. In that way you would create a topic and create something interesting to talk about. I think this would work. They may want to speak in Vietnamese, but no, you have to speak in English. Even if wrong, but we won't laughing at you. That's how you want it. I think it very hard, too. So the practice is very important.

Yumiko's barriers and successes at MWCC.

Yumiko identified only one barrier to her in her experiences at MWCC. That was language. Yumiko felt strongly that Vietnamese-American students need a place to practice English – especially listening and speaking skills.

I think the first thing would be my English. I think for all Asian people, their grammar is pretty good because they have training a lot in Vietnam or in other countries. But listening skills and speaking skills, they need more time to get used to it. Especially listening skills first. The first time I got here, I couldn't understand anything because the accent is totally different. It take time. I think English is the most problem when Vietnamese people come here. They want to practice their English but they just don't be able to do it. You know what I mean? Actually, they do have opportunity to practice but they just hesitate to speak out because they are afraid people were laughing at them. So it's kind of hard to come out of the box and to, you know, express themselves.

Yumiko discussed the process that Vietnamese go through in Vietnam to learn English. Her feeling is that writing is easiest, then listening and speaking. Vietnamese schools often focus on the writing. When they work on speaking, they may use a different accent than a student will hear in the United States. When asked about learning English speaking skills, she stated,

Because even the teacher [in Vietnam], they don't have the right accent. How can they teach you the right accent to speak? And we don't usually hear English in Vietnam so it is hard for them, too. So writing is the most way people teach and learn English. Speaking is hard. Like when I just want to try to make a correct sentence. But it take me two or three minutes. When it come out from my mouth,

people still can understand me, but I think, oh, that is broken English. I'm not supposed to say that.

Yumiko identified four successes that she experienced at MWCC. They were (a) improving her English language skills, (b) learning about college life, (c) gaining knowledge to be successful in the future, and (d) gaining credits to transfer to a four-year college. Yumiko summarized, "I've learned a lot that I don't know before. I know how the college life is supposed to be. I feel that I am learning things that will allow me to be successful and allow me to transfer my credit." These successes have allowed Yumiko to assimilate into the local community.

Yumiko's sources of heuristic knowledge.

As noted earlier, Yumiko's first exposure to MWCC occurred when the ESL Director visited the local high school to administer the TOEFL test. He was her first source of heuristic knowledge, she noted, "When I come to MWCC, he was my helper to find out how to register. He helped me to find out which class is good for me and help get on the right track." She relies on the ESL Director for questions about college processes, stating, "He answers all the questions that I have and he gives me some good advice." She will talk to other students but usually also goes to the ESL Director as the authority or person with the best answer and correct knowledge, indicating, "He is working here and he knows more. I look for some people who actually know it. So they will be able to help me out. He is a more reliable source." For a question about class material, she will talk to other students but will also ask the instructor, saying, "If I have a question about class, I will ask the instructor first."

Other sources of heuristic knowledge were two friends. One was a former MWCC student and one a current student. They showed her around and told her how to

navigate the system. Yumiko recalled, “I want to go but I don’t know how to do it. But lucky because I have a friend and he is also going to MWCC too, so he tried to help me out on the paperwork and how you take a class and how the financial aid works.” They told her what to do to get admitted and registered.

Yumiko suggested that a current Vietnamese-American student could also be a first connection when students arrive at MWCC, stating, “They could try to make a connection between the English environment and the student who just got here.” They could help with paperwork and financial aid. They could be helpful to any foreign student – not just Vietnamese-American.

She also suggested that MWCC could send a current Vietnamese-American student to the local high school, explaining, “You can send somebody who already experience it and send them over there. Is already interested in college. And says that’s what you do. You have to do this first step, second step. Like just guide them.” Yumiko also noted that this person may be accepted better than the ESL Director who is viewed as knowledgeable, but also as an authority who should not be approached. “So that may be something that would help students at the high school feel more comfortable knowing what they need to do.” Once a student was at MWCC, he or she could be connected with another Vietnamese-American student, because “everything is new. And especially when you just started you don’t know what room you go, who you should talk to, and what should you do first.”

Yumiko noted that studying in the United States is more independent than in Vietnam. Students have to learn on their own and need to be able to seek out information. They need to know how to find the writing center and computer lab and

need to work with other students in study groups. Again, a connection to a current Vietnamese-American student would be helpful with these transitions.

Summary: Yumiko.

Yumiko has spent her four years in the United States successfully adapting to, and assimilating into, American society. Her young age may be an advantage for her. She is also highly motivated. She knows she needs to learn English well if she is going to be successful at the university, especially if she continues to pursue one of her two goals – international business or medicine. She looks at the world each day with fresh and excited eyes. She has used her diverse cultural background to her advantage, thus being able to live in three cultural worlds. Yumiko knows what she wants, and she seeks out the people who can provide her with the correct answers and guidance concerning her next steps and her overall goals. As a result, she has been able to create her own heuristic knowledge, much like Nancy was able to do.

In terms of Padilla's four categories of barriers faced by minority students, some of these were either non-issues for Yumiko, or she overcame them readily. Padilla's discontinuity barriers were not a challenge for Yumiko. She came to the US as a young person ready to learn new things. While she may say that she sees herself as Chinese rather than American, she has learned how to fit into the American culture and be comfortable in it. As a result, her transition from Vietnam to the US appears to be complete. She has learned to be on her own as much as she can, considering she is a 21-year-old student living with her parents. Yumiko has the desire to live on her own and to become independent in a similar manner as native-born American students her age do. Valuing education over a job appears to have been a non-issue for Yumiko. She has

the support of her family and needs to work only part-time, and her primary focus is on her studies and advancing to a university.

Padilla's lack-of-nurturing and lack-of-presence barriers did not appear to have been barriers that Yumiko needed to overcome. Since Yumiko traveled to the US with her parents, and they had a relative who was already living in the local area, she had the support of her parents as she progressed through her studies in high school and at MWCC. Even though her parents had not attended college in Vietnam, their native culture values education, and they are willing to support Yumiko in her studies. Yumiko stated that instructors at MWCC were helpful to her, and their expectations for her were no different than those for other students. Yumiko did express that students may display some racial bias, but she also stated this was due more to their lack of understanding of foreign students. Once they got to know Yumiko, the feelings of racial and/or cultural isolation disappeared. Even though Yumiko expressed that she was able to navigate her way through MWCC with the help of two friends and the ESL Director - and therefore create her own heuristic knowledge - she stated that new Vietnamese-American students could benefit from contact with Vietnamese-American students who are current students. She also thought that a club, whether an International Club or Vietnamese-American Club, would be beneficial to new students.

The fourth of Padilla's barriers, the resource barriers, did not appear to be problems for Yumiko. Yumiko's parents are providing her financial support, and as a result, she has not needed to learn to navigate her way through the financial aid processes.

In summary, as the youngest of my participants, Yumiko may have benefited from arriving in the United States as a teenager. She appears to have been able to learn, explore, and assimilate into the American culture while at the same time preserving her Vietnamese and Chinese culture. As she said, she sees herself living in three worlds, and she enjoys that, rather than seeing it as a burden. As a result of this, like Nancy, Yumiko may have arrived at MWCC having already encountered and addressed many of Padilla's barriers. Therefore, she may have been able to create her own heuristic knowledge concerning MWCC more rapidly than other Vietnamese-American students may be able to do.

Pham's story

Pham's background and journey to US.

Pham is a very charismatic young man majoring in auto-body repair. He is 24 years old and has been in the US since he was fifteen. I first met Pham when he was in class in the auto-body-repair laboratory. At that time, he was dressed in clothing that was suitable for working on cars: a t-shirt, loose-fitting casual pants, and a baseball cap. When we shook hands, he apologized for having dirty hands and for being dressed so casually. When Pham came to his interviews, he was dressed in clothing that could be described as business casual (a collared shirt, twill pants, leather shoes), and his hair was very neatly styled. It was evident that Pham is concerned about his appearance and also wants to fit in with American culture.

Pham came to the United States with his parents and a younger sister. "I came here with my whole family to the United States. Both parents, and my sister. We come here for freedom. My brother, he was born here." His sister is 14 years old now, and his

younger brother is 13 years old now. Pham lives with his parents and siblings. Pham noted, "My family came to Lake City first. That is where we were told to go. We lived right here, and that's where we've lived the whole time then. After my brother was born, I was taking care of my brother during afternoons so that my father could go to work."

Pham talked a little about the family that he had left behind in Vietnam. "I have other family in Vietnam. Like cousins, aunts and uncles. We have a lot. I don't think they want to come to the United States. They very rich. They work on a farm, but they're happy." His family has only one relative in North America, and that is an uncle in Canada. Thus, his immediate family is very close.

In Vietnam, Pham grew up on a farm. It was a long distance to school, so he dropped out before finishing high school. "When I came here, I was fifteen. In Vietnam I quit school. I did not go for a long time. We on the farm, so it took a long time get to school. Everyday. Back and forth. So – we quit." He was able to start in tenth grade when he arrived in the US. Pham explained,

My first school here was Pearl High School. Grade ten is where I started. I had ESL all three years, but the last year I have only one or two classes left. Then I had to take all of the other classes to be able to graduate- history and speech and math.

After high school, Pham wanted to go to college, but he had his family demands to meet, and he also needed money. His parents have not attended college and may not be aware of the demands and support needed to be successful. Tuition was a concern for Pham because he needed to pay his own tuition. So, he needed to work full-time in order to go to college, he explained: "I been working. Actually I got to pay for my tuition, so, I got to go to work. During that time working at grocery store. And I was a dealer [cards] for the [gambling] boat. Right now working at body shop." When asked why he

went to MWCC, his first reason was the reasonable tuition rate: “The first is cheap price - tuition price.” So, he worked full-time and went to MWCC part-time. He took the TOEFL test and more ESL classes. He took ESL part-time for two years. He wasn’t sure about what he wanted to major in because he was concerned about his language abilities, saying, “I go to MWCC and take it [ESL] again. At that time, I did not know my major, not yet. I did not know how my English going. I knew I wanted to go to college but not sure for what.” Eventually, he decided on Auto Body Repair, explaining, “I decide take Auto Body. Very quick. You don’t need a lot of English, take that major. My English is not very good enough for other degrees.”

As I talked with Pham, it was evident that he sees himself in the role of caretaker for his family. His father and mother both work. They work long hours and as a result, Pham has needed to be at home in the afternoons and evenings to take care of his younger siblings. He said, “The whole time I’ve been part-time because my brother, I go home by 12:00 or 1:00. I was taking care of my brother during afternoons so that my father could go to work.” Pham was the oldest sibling, and he needed to help out, explaining, “I pick up my brother, he was too little to walk home. The first two years at MWCC, I could only be in class until noon and then had to leave and go home.” More recently, between the first and second interview, Pham’s father became very ill and was hospitalized. Pham needed to take on the role of being the family connection for his father’s medical care. Pham’s mother has not learned English very well, and so Pham has needed to be present at all of the medical meetings to help his mother understand what the doctors were telling her.

Pham's cultural connections.

Pham is another Vietnamese-American student who is living in more than one world culturally. When asked about how he sees himself, culturally, he replied that he sees himself as, "Vietnamese-American – I have to remember my country." He is an American citizen. Pham said, "I am a citizen, I was able to get that after being here for five years. I took a test."

His parents are maintaining their native Vietnamese culture. At home, no one is supposed to speak English, only Vietnamese. "Right now sometime if speak English at home, you know, my Dad said, 'Why you speak English?' No English." Pham says this is a way to never forget their language. His mother has very limited skill in English, he claims, "My mother, she does not speak enough English to go to store, no. She know a couple words. She relies on my father, my brother and sister, and me to help her." His father can speak English, and Pham's brother and sister both speak English fairly well. His brother and sister do not speak Vietnamese as well as Pham, though, because they have both lived in the US most of their lives.

Since his family does not have any other relatives in the area, they rely on their local Catholic church for friends and support. Pham explains, "My family is involved in the celebration for the Vietnamese New Year. We come every year. With the Catholic church. Vietnamese priest at church has mass at 2:00 that he does all in Vietnamese. He do both English and Vietnamese."

At MWCC, Pham associates mostly with students in his Auto Body Repair program, stating "I hang around with whoever is available, like American students. I feel like I mix in with people pretty well if they are American or whatever." There aren't

very many Vietnamese-American students in the program, partly because the program itself isn't very large. But, Pham indicated, "If I see the Vietnamese people outside of class, if on a break or something I speak Vietnamese." He is required to speak English in the Auto Body Repair laboratory, saying, "In the lab, you know, no Vietnamese in there. It's all American." The program classrooms and laboratory are in a building that is separate from the main campus building. This also isolates Pham from other Vietnamese-American students who may be attending MWCC.

When Pham and I discussed whether he had perceived any kind of prejudice, racism, or treatment of him different from others, he replied: "I don't think so. No. Teachers are very nice."

Pham's experiences at MWCC.

When we talked about Pham's experiences at MWCC with teachers, students, and staff, the conversation focused more on the auto-body-repair classes rather than the earlier ones. When I asked Pham about his experiences with his teachers, he spoke very highly of them. Since he was in a career-technical program, he has had two instructors for most of his classes in the program. As a result, he was able to get to know them well, and they also know him well. Pham commented about his instructors were, "They help you a lot. We can ask them to slow down. They can help you in class, in lab. Each class is long, three hours. Get to have a lot of help." Pham noted that his instructors could help students primarily only in class, "The teachers don't have a lot of time to help with your notes outside of class. After class done, they have to go home and do something else. Everybody is busy."

When we talked about getting help from other students, Pham stated that most of the help was given orally in class: "If you don't know, you can ask them. Other student asked me, too. And if I do know I tell them. And if I don't know, you know, I say, 'I don't know.'" Pham noted that he usually did not receive help from other students with his note taking, that he did his own notes: "I did by myself." This was due partly because he had to leave the college right after class, so he couldn't stay at school and work with other students: "When the class is over and now I go home and I do have other stuff to do. So mostly I worked on my notes by myself."

When we discussed activities outside of class, Pham stated that he could only visit with other students if class was completed early: "If a class get out early, yes, if it got out on time, I needed to leave." Since he usually needed to leave right after class to go home to take care of his younger brother, Pham did not take part in any organized activities or events on campus. Also, since he has been part-time during his academic career at MWCC, he worked full-time and did not have time for activities outside of class. "I used to work at the boat at night, about 25 to 32 hours a week. Now, at auto shop, I work 40 hours."

Pham spends most of his time in the Career Technology building. As a result, he does not think there are very many Vietnamese-American students at MWCC, saying, "Not very many Vietnamese students at MWCC. There are some Vietnamese students in Auto Body. Only a few there, but some of them I don't even know." Pham indicated that he has a couple of Vietnamese-American friends who are also in the Auto Body Repair program. He explained, "A couple of my friends I know, I hang out here with a couple of my friends in Auto Body over there on the side of the building." They started

at the same time as he did, but they got ahead of him because they were attending full-time. "A couple Vietnamese, but they in other class before me. They take full-time class. Like one my friend, so they got ahead of me. I still talk to them."

Pham could not remember a lot of details concerning the professional staff at MWCC. He felt that was because he relied on the ESL Director to help him with registration, advising, and other processes. Overall, he felt that the student services staff was helpful, noting, "You can call and ask them anything." Pham had the ESL Director as his advisor until he entered the Auto Body Repair program. At that point, he had one of the program instructors for his advisor. They helped him and all of the students in the program know when to register and what classes to register for.

During our discussion of student services, Pham indicated that he thought a Vietnamese-American employee in that area would be helpful for new students coming to the college, saying, "That would be good so new people know what's going on. They don't know English well, and they want to take ESL. People have a problem with all the financial stuff. They would help a lot for people learning English."

Pham's barriers and successes at MWCC.

When we discussed Pham's perceived barriers at MWCC, he had difficulty identifying any at first. After some thought, Pham identified English as something that he needed to improve on when he arrived at MWCC, but he did not see it as a barrier. Pham did not feel like there was anything that was hard for him to accomplish at MWCC, saying, "I think nothing very difficult, you know. I go there and try because I had take because my TOEFL not good enough. So I had to take that to be able to get out and study more in regular class." This may have been due to his enjoyment of working on

cars and his confidence in his abilities in the auto-body area. Part of this may have also been due to his long time spent at MWCC because of being a part-time student. He may have forgotten his earlier difficulties. Pham also seemed somewhat concerned about answering the question, as if he did not want to appear to be incompetent. When asked about barriers, he said, "English may be a barrier. I had some English already, but my TOEFL not good enough. I had to take ESL to be able to study in regular class. I think learn English. That's hard."

When asked about his successes at MWCC, he again seemed to be embarrassed to answer. He said, "I gained skills for the Auto Body program. Not a big deal, you know, but a little bit more." Also, after thinking a while, he stated that he had gained in English language skills while at MWCC.

Pham's sources of heuristic knowledge.

It was not clear what Pham's sources of heuristic knowledge were when he first arrived at MWCC. This may be because his first experiences at MWCC were more than five years ago. Also, by chance, Pham was exposed to two very good sources of heuristic knowledge early in his academic career. First, he met the ESL Director while attending high school. The Director provided information about how to attend MWCC. When Pham arrived at MWCC, he was assigned to the ESL Director as an advisor. This situation is similar to other Vietnamese-American students who attend MWCC, such as Yumiko and Ba. Pham recounted his first experiences at MWCC:

I went there by myself. I asked my friend how to get there. I asked a friend how to get there but then went and read the forms myself. Mr. Smith, he go to Pearl High School to have the students take a TOEFL test and then he tell us how to get in there. He came to the Pearl High School and helped out the ESL students. I met with him first thing and then he helped me register.

Second, Pham moved directly into a career-technology program that is very structured. There are only two instructors in the program, and the program course schedule is very structured. As a result, Pham was given clear instructions on when to register, as well as information on other college processes, and he related, “When in Auto Body, the instructors help you with scheduling classes. Most of the Auto Body students fill out their registration cards at the same time in class. So that was a help to us.” As a result, the college provided Pham with the sources of heuristic knowledge without his needing to seek them out.

Summary: Pham.

Pham is an individual who appears to have managed his way through MWCC with the most limited number of sources of heuristic knowledge of all six participants. He is a young person with a lot of responsibilities – work, family, and school. It appears that by chance, he was afforded two very good sources of heuristic knowledge. One was the ESL Director, both while he was in high school and at MWCC. The second was the structured Auto Body program that provided calculated guidance to promote persistence and success. The presence of these two sources of heuristic knowledge provided Pham with the information that he needed to navigate his way through MWCC. At first glance, this may be viewed as an advantage, but a review of Padilla’s four barriers indicates that Pham may be struggling with some of these because he has not identified and faced them just yet.

In terms of the first barrier, discontinuity, Pham still appears to be facing these barriers. Even though he was young when he arrived in the US, he appears to be less assimilated into the American culture than would be expected. He has played the role of

older sibling for fifteen years, and his family still speaks Vietnamese in the home. He does not want to forget his country. In terms of learning to be on one's own, Pham lives with his parents, and he did not indicate a desire to get out on his own. With his father's being ill, he may not seek independence for some time. Pham has been working full-time for a long time. When asked about his successes at MWCC, he mentioned learning his auto-body skills. Yet, he did not appear to be proud of those skills or to value them. He stated that they were not hard, and he seemed to be uneasy saying that these skills were part of his successes. It was difficult to determine if the skills were actually easy for him, if he truly did not value the skills gained as part of his education, or if he was displaying modesty as a cultural trait. Therefore, Pham may be having difficulty coming to terms with the value of a job verses the value of education.

Padilla's lack-of-nurturing barrier does not appear to be of concern to Pham. He has had support at MWCC through the ESL Director and his Auto-Body program instructors. His close relationship with his family was obvious, although it is not apparent whether his parents want Pham to attend college since he has many family responsibilities. He appears to be respected by the program faculty members, and fellow students will ask him for information. Pham knows other Vietnamese-American students in the Auto Body Repair program and some other auto-related programs. They may have provided role models for him.

In Padilla's lack-of-presence barrier Pham did not indicate that he felt there was a lack of minority-related materials in the curriculum. Since he is in a Career Technology program, however, the emphasis is on the skills to be learned. Pham did not indicate that the lack of visible minority support programs was a concern for him, but he did have a

positive relationship with the ESL Director. This may have negated that need. Pham appeared to have some challenges with cultural isolation. Some of this may have been due to his physical isolation from activities on the rest of the campus. Pham felt that MWCC does not have very many Vietnamese-American students on campus. He only knew of those who were in auto-related programs. Since he needed to leave campus immediately after classes, he did not have the opportunity to encounter other Vietnamese-American students on campus. As a result, he may have felt somewhat isolated. Pham indicated that he did not perceive any feelings of racial bias or prejudice in his program. He stated that he felt comfortable talking to all types of students in the Career Technology building.

Padilla's fourth category – resource barriers – appears to be a challenge for Pham. He indicated that he needs to work to be able to pay tuition. He did not indicate that he has received financial aid. He may not want to try to navigate the financial aid system. This may be one reason why he continues to attend school part-time. If he does not work, he won't have the resources to attend college.

In summary, as I listened to Pham and compared his story to those offered by participants, I felt as though Pham had developed the fewest connections to MWCC. Pham was a part-time student, as were three other participants, but the other three talked about their connections more than Pham did. The three other part-time students - Nancy, Van, and Ba - were able to socialize more with their classmates than Pham was able to do. Pham's family circumstances caused him to be on campus only for classes, leaving right away to go home to watch his younger brother. As a result, it wasn't clear to me how much Pham appreciates his experiences and education at MWCC.

Summary: Cross-Case Themes

In the previous sections I have discussed each of my participants' stories about their experiences at MWCC. I discussed their individual backgrounds, cultural connections, and journeys to the United States. I discussed the stories they told me in relation to their experiences at MWCC involving students, faculty, and staff. Also, I described what each participant perceived to be his or her successes and barriers at MWCC, as well as the heuristic knowledge developed by each participant to deal with those barriers.

As a closing to each discussion, I analyzed each participant's experience in relation to the four barriers that successful minority students overcome as they progress through their college experience (Padilla et al., 1997). The four barriers are these: (a) discontinuity barriers, (b) lack-of-nurturing barriers, (c) lack-of-presence barriers, and (d) resource barriers. Since each of my participants immigrated to the United States from Vietnam, I have added an additional barrier, the language barrier. In this section, I will present my findings for each barrier. The discussion will include the similarities and differences identified among my participants for each of the five barriers.

Language as a Barrier

Language is the one barrier that all six of my participants were able to identify as important. All of the participants realized that they needed to learn English well before they could earn college credits. Some of the participants had been exposed to English in Vietnam, but none of them felt they were ready to move directly into credit classes in the US. Their routes to finding how to gain access to ESL classes followed two pathways. Two of the six, Yumiko and Pham, were in high school before they attended MWCC.

Both of them took the TOEFL test in high school, and both met the ESL Director from MWCC while they were in high school. They both used the connection with the ESL Director to move from high school to MWCC. They had him for an advisor for at least part of their time at MWCC. The ESL Director was their primary source of heuristic knowledge.

The other four - Van, Nancy, Howie, and Ba - came to know the ESL Director by another means. Each of them knew about the MWCC downtown center, and that it offered ESL. Each of them determined that the ESL taught at that site was not adequate enough if they wanted to take college courses. Van was the only participant who took all of the ESL classes at the downtown center; Nancy and Ba each decided to move to the main campus instead of completing the downtown program first. These four participants were each connected to the ESL Director by an employee of MWCC. This may have been a faculty or staff member in advising at the main campus of MWCC or someone from the downtown center. Ultimately, the ESL Director was the source of much of the heuristic knowledge developed by these four students.

Once the students were connected to the ESL Director, they all moved through ESL on the main campus until they were allowed to take credit courses. Overall, all six participants were satisfied with their experiences in ESL at MWCC. All six participants noted that it was difficult to move from the ESL classes to the regular college classes at first. They each noted that the most important thing for new Vietnamese-American students coming to MWCC would be to learn and practice English. Each of the six participants identified English as one of their barriers at MWCC, but each also identified it as one of their successes at MWCC. As a result, each of the participants was able to

overcome language as a barrier and was able to progress to his or her chosen field of study.

Discontinuity Barrier

The discontinuity barrier (Table F3) has three subcomponents: transition from Vietnam to the US, learning to be on your own, and difficulty coming to terms with the value of a job versus the value of an education. Three participants appear to have overcome this barrier or did not need to face it. Nancy and Ba both embraced their new country and were motivated to fit in as soon as they could. They both had family support to assist them with the transition; their motivation allowed them to take things in stride and become independent. They both knew they wanted a better life and put education ahead of just having a job that would pay the bills. Yumiko also made the transition to living in the US very quickly, possibly because of her young age. She has learned to be on her own as much as she can, considering she is a 21-year-old student living with her parents. Yumiko has the desire to live on her own and to become independent in a similar manner as native-born American students do. Valuing education over a job appears to have been a non-issue for Yumiko. She has the support of her family and needs to work only part-time, and her primary focus is on her studies and advancing to a university.

Van, Howie, and Pham appear to have challenges with at least one or two of the discontinuity barriers. Van and Pham see themselves as Vietnamese-American, and Howie sees himself as Vietnamese. Each of them appears to be less assimilated into the American culture than the other three students. In terms of learning to live on their own, Howie has overcome this barrier, although Van and Pham have not done so completely.

Van appears to be holding back on venturing outside of the college to look for employment. As a result, he hasn't become a truly independent individual yet. Van and Pham both have family responsibilities that cause them to remain place bound.

In terms of valuing education over having a job, Van appears to have overcome this barrier. However, continuing his education without using his completed degree may indicate that he is using education as a safe haven and an excuse for not making a move in his career. Howie and Pham are both challenged with balancing the desire for an education and having a job. Howie needs to work many hours to support himself, although he does have a goal of transferring to a university. As a result, he may value education above a job but is having difficulty achieving the goal. Pham has been working full-time or close to full-time for his entire time at MWCC. He definitely feels the need to work and puts that first ahead of education. He is also the only student of the six who may be satisfied with earning only an associate's degree. This will provide him with the knowledge and skills to do his current job.

Lack of Nurturing Barrier

The lack-of-nurturing barrier (Table A4) has four subcomponents: lack of nurturing, lack of family support and understanding, lower expectations of the student by faculty or staff, and lack of minority role models. In this category, only one student appears to be finding this a challenge: that student is Howie. The other students either have overcome these barriers or did not view them as barriers at any time. These five students all have family in the United States. For four of them, this is their biological family; and for Nancy, this is her family by marriage. So, a lack of family support, understanding, and nurturing was not a barrier for them. Howie came to the US by

himself and is still on his own. He has friends for support, but he does not have support that is present in his home environment.

None of the students expressed perceptions of lower expectations by faculty or staff. They found faculty and staff to be helpful, but they did not feel that they were held to lower expectations or were expected to fail. Howie, Van, and Pham were the only students who may have had concerns about Vietnamese role models. Van and Pham both have connections to their church and other means of contact with Vietnamese-American individuals. Pham noted some Vietnamese-American students who were in his program but were ahead of him: these students may serve as role models for him. Howie appears to have more connections through his fellow employees at his jobs. It appeared that most of these individuals were American or some culture other than Vietnamese. This may be why Howie felt that a Vietnamese Student Association on campus would be beneficial.

Lack of Presence Barrier

The lack-of-presence barrier (Table A5) has five subcomponents: lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum, lack of visibility of minority support programs, cultural isolation, lack of minority role models or mentors, and racial isolation. The lack of minority role models or mentors has been addressed in the previous section, lack of nurturing. None of the participants raised the question of the presence or absence of minority issues or materials in the curriculum. This may be due partly because of the majors that these students have chosen to pursue. With the exception of Yumiko, these students are each pursuing programs that are two-year technical and career oriented. In these programs, there are a limited number of classes taken outside of that program area. The students may not have expected the curriculum to include minority issues. Yumiko

is in a transfer program but has been taking many science courses, so again the focus is on the content and skills, not explicitly on minority or cultural concerns.

In the category of lack of visibility of minority support programs, Howie is the only one who appears to still find that to be a challenge. Nancy, Yumiko, Ba, and Pham did not indicate this to be a high priority, although Yumiko and Ba both indicated that some type of support may be beneficial. Van, Ba, and Pham have found support from other Vietnamese-American individuals through their church or other associations. Nancy and Yumiko are well assimilated into American culture and are not concerned with this type of support. Howie appeared to feel separated from other Vietnamese-American students on campus, and he felt a need for a support group. No matter how these students felt about minority-support programs, all felt that they were too busy to take advantage of them if these programs were available to them.

Nancy and Yumiko were the only two students who appear to have overcome cultural isolation. These two students are very well assimilated into American culture and can function very well within that culture. Van, Howie, Ba, and Pham each appear to have some struggles with feeling like outsiders from time to time. Their comments - such as not being able to understand their friends' jokes, not really liking American food, and not having time to spend with friends on campus - seem to reveal these feelings.

Feelings of racial isolation were perceived differently than cultural isolation. Van and Howie were the only ones to have mentioned racial isolation and to still be challenged with it. Both of these students feel their chances of moving into professional careers are limited due to the racist nature of the United States. Van and Howie both feel that even if they can learn English very well, they will still have difficulty finding

professional jobs because of prejudice that will exist due to their accents. Yumiko identified some racial feelings among American students, but she noted that these feelings typically disappeared once she was able to get to know the students. Her perceptions may have been described better as cultural differences rather than racial.

Resource Barrier

The resource barrier (Table F6) has two subcomponents: lack of money and the financial aid system. These two subcomponents will be discussed as one topic. Each of the participants traveled to the United States under his or her own unique circumstances. As a result, each student had his or her own unique concern about money and the ability to pay for college. In general, four of the students - Nancy, Howie, Yumiko, and Ba - developed a means to pay for tuition and supplies and have overcome that barrier.

Nancy worked as a waitress first and then acquired a better paying job. She was a part-time student and worked full-time. She married an American and then was in a more stable financial situation. She did have struggles with the financial aid system; she had problems acquiring the information that she needed to apply for financial aid and found doing so to be frustrating.

Howie has paid for his schooling by working many hours. He has been able to develop positive relationships with his employers that allow him to have time off to study for exams and to ensure that he is at class. Howie did not discuss financial aid in the interviews; he may not have attempted to apply for financial aid.

Yumiko lives with her parents. Her parents work and are focused on her success, and they provide financial assistance to her. Yumiko works two jobs, both part-time and with limited numbers of hours each week. She is also able to adjust her hours to meet her

school and study needs. Yumiko did not discuss financial aid in the interviews; she may not have attempted to apply for financial aid.

Ba has worked since he arrived in the United States. He has worked in a restaurant and in hospitals. He stated that Vietnamese-American students often rely on other Vietnamese-American students to show them how to apply for financial aid. Ba did not discuss whether he had applied for or received financial aid while at MWCC.

Van and Pham still appear to have concerns with money. Van lives with his mother, two siblings, a niece and his girlfriend. He works many hours to overcome the lack of money barrier to pay bills and support himself and his family. He felt that foreign students do not understand the financial aid system, and that they need help filling out forms. Van did not indicate that he had applied for or received financial aid from the college.

Pham indicated that he must pay his own tuition. He lives at home, so he may not have to pay for housing. Pham has felt the need to work full-time to assist his family and to pay his tuition. He did not indicate that he had applied for or received financial aid from the college. At the second interview, Pham was concerned about his father's health. If his father cannot work, Pham may need to postpone his degree completion to help pay for family expenses.

Conclusion

In chapter four I have provided descriptions of my study site, the characteristics of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC, and a profile of my six participants. This was followed by the individual stories of my participants. For each participant, this story included their journey to the United States, their connections to their Vietnamese culture,

and their experiences with students, faculty and staff at MWCC. The stories also included their perceived barriers and successes at MWCC, their sources of heuristic knowledge, and a summary addressing how, or if, they overcame the four barriers identified by Padilla et al. (1997).

The overall purpose of this chapter was to utilize narrative to relate the stories told to me by six students at MWCC as a vehicle to describe how these students gained heuristic knowledge, and how they were able to employ that knowledge to overcome the four barriers presented by Padilla et al. (1997). Each student had a unique experience at MWCC. However, they share a common background of having traveled to the United States from their native country of Vietnam. Each of them expressed English language skills as a significant barrier, although each was able to overcome that barrier to become successful students at MWCC.

All of the participants were first generation students. Their parents were not able to inform them about the educational system of the US. Only one student had siblings who had attended college in the US. Therefore, they all faced the necessity of gaining heuristic knowledge in order to navigate their way through the college experience at MWCC.

Each of the participants has faced the challenge of living in a new culture. Three of the six can be considered to be well assimilated into American culture. The other three still have some challenges to overcome, but they have adapted enough to be productive citizens of the local community. They are motivated and willing to continue to learn and adapt more and more to American culture.

The determination of these six individuals to succeed in college was evident to me because each one identified gaining knowledge as one of their perceived successes at MWCC. It indicated that they had learned skills and knowledge that they can use to improve their lives.

Each of the six students I interviewed has completed his or her program or is on the way to completion. They have faced language and cultural challenges. These two challenges may have caused the normal challenges of academic and social integration to be at a higher level for them than for native-born American students. Each student demonstrated high levels of motivation to strive for their goals. They were able to identify their barriers and to seek out the knowledge needed to overcome those barriers. That knowledge became their unique form of heuristic knowledge. They demonstrated resiliency as they progressed from one challenge to the next. They have demonstrated that through determination, those challenges faced by Vietnamese-American students can be overcome, and they can find success.

Chapter five will further discuss the common threads and unique themes found in my data. Implications for community colleges will be presented, along with recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Chapter four provided the findings of my research process. Chapter five will provide interpretation of the data presented in chapter four. A narrative interpretation of the data will be presented first. This will be followed by a discussion of the connections to the literature review in chapter two. The connections to the literature section will be divided into three sections: (a) the common themes, (b) the unique threads, and (c) heuristic knowledge. This will be followed by my conclusions drawn from the information gathered and the implications and recommendations for the campus study site and community colleges at large. The chapter will conclude with questions for further research in this area of study.

In review, chapter one provided an overview of my project. This overview described my perspective as a researcher, the purpose of my study, and the research questions that framed my study. Chapter two provided a review of the literature needed to understand the research on topics most relevant to my proposed study. I reported on the challenges faced by Asian-American students, and gave a description of the Myth of the Model Minority and its implications for Asian-American students. I also reported on Padilla's (1991, 1994, 1997, 1999) work with minority students. Chapter three explained my research design, indicating why I chose qualitative research and the narrative approach. The discussion also included the details of my methodology, including a description of my study site, how I selected my participants, and how I collected and analyzed the data that I acquired. I also discussed the issues of ethics and trustworthiness involved in my study.

Chapter four reviewed the description of the study site and introduced the reader to the characteristics of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC. This was followed by a discussion of the personal characteristics of my research participants along with the educational background of each participant's parents. Each of my participant's stories was discussed in chapter four. Excerpts from the interview transcripts were integrated into my narrative analysis to provide the reader with a rich description of my participants' experiences at MWCC. A summary of common themes that ran through their stories as well as unique differences in their stories was followed by a discussion of how each participant used heuristic knowledge to address the four barriers outlined by Padilla et al. (1997). A cross-case discussion of how the students addressed the barriers preceded a concluding section.

As indicated earlier, the first section of this chapter will be the narrative interpretation of the data presented in chapter four. Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to gather data in the form of stories told to them by their participants and to analyze the data by breaking the stories down into the parts that give rise to meaning. The researcher then becomes the author of a new story that describes the participants' experiences in a manner that gives voice to the participants. These voices are combined with that of the author to construct the final story. Clinchy (2003) described this process as taking constructed experiences, deconstructing them, and then reconstructing them to achieve the final product.

The goal of my project was to interview individuals and, by providing a safe environment, to gain knowledge of their experiences at MWCC. The use of open-ended questions promoted an atmosphere that allowed the participants to discuss their

experiences in uninterrupted stories. The narrative approach allowed me, the researcher, to listen to the stories of my participants, to analyze them for common threads of information, and to tell their stories as part of my own learning experience.

In the section that follows, I will tell the reconstructed stories of my six participants. These stories are concerned with only a short segment of their lives; this segment of time is the time they spent at MWCC. Their stories are limited to that experience in that institution, and they are not intended to tell the life stories of my participants.

Narrative Interpretation - The Photo Album

Each of my six participants spent over one year at MWCC; and, through two interviews with each one, I learned details of their experiences and drew meaning from each description of their experience. As I reflected on the information my participants shared with me, I considered the wide range of applications of narrative in research (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007). I realized that the information they shared with me about their experiences while at MWCC could be understood and characterized by a series of imaginary photographs. These photographs could form the framework of my narrative interpretation. The final form of the imaginary photo album did not take shape until I had analyzed the data and had written the stories of my participants in chapter four. It was emergent and not a part of my original research plan.

As each of my participants talked to me about their experiences at MWCC, it was difficult for them to separate their personal lives from their lives as students on campus. They talked about events and special occasions involving their families, interactions with students, faculty and staff on campus, and interactions with their co-workers at jobs off-

campus. They also talked about their own identity and the way they see themselves living their lives, often in multiple identities. As I analyzed my interview transcripts, the process created mental images that I used to build a narrative around a series of imaginary snapshots of my participants' experiences at MWCC. These imaginary snapshots allowed me to construct an imaginary "photo album" that expresses their stories as well as a composite of their stories. As mentioned earlier, the development of my photo album was an emergent process that developed as I reflected on my data analysis in chapter four.

My imaginary photo album contains photos that I could have received from each participant illustrating the situations mentioned above. The "album" is how I have organized my interpretations of my participants' stories and experiences. Therefore, it is not a co-creation, but it tells my participants' stories, providing them with a voice, utilizing my voice as the author, as the vehicle. Van was the first person I interviewed, so he is the first student who "shared" his photos with me. The other five students' photos follow those of Van. The final photo in the album is a "family" photo, a blending or composite of the other photos in the album.

Van's photos

Van's photos provide insight into the people who Van socializes with while at MWCC and while he is away from campus. The pictures of Van's activities on campus are from various areas of the college. The only photo with Vietnamese-American students is one that he took in the computer lab. A small group of Vietnamese-American students are sitting in a group in the lab. They are not with American students. Van also took a picture of the writing lab where he gets assistance with writing papers for his

general education classes. Van has a picture of his favorite tutor – an American student. He also took a picture while he was in his calculus class. There is one African American male student, and the others were Caucasians.

Van also has pictures of two study rooms that he visited between classes. The rooms have tables with seating for four. Van has photos of some of the students who were in the study room. Two of these students are helping him with his calculus problems – Jeremy and Susan, both Caucasian students. Van has made a note on the back of the photo saying that he usually needs to initiate the conversation. In the other study room, Van took pictures of students at two tables. He noted that he did not know these students from his classes, and when he tried to talk to them, they did not want to help him.

The event that Van featured was his attendance at a celebration of the Vietnamese New Year. This event occurs in Lake City, the city with the majority of the local Vietnamese-American population. Van has a number of photos – some of the photos are of his mother, his siblings, and his niece. Van has a photo of himself with the Catholic priest from the local church. His other photos include pictures of friends he likes to associate with and who are his social outlets. All of these individuals are Vietnamese-American. This makes it clear that Van's Vietnamese-American friends are for socializing.

Van asked a friend at the New Year celebration to take his picture. This portrait shows a 39-year old man of short-to-medium stature. He has neatly combed, short, dark brown hair and dark eyes, and he is clean-shaven. His expression looks as if he would like to smile broadly, but he is refraining because to do so would not be proper. So, he

maintains a slight smile. Van is wearing a polo-style knit shirt, khaki pants, and laced oxford shoes; every detail of his clothing is neat and in place.

I can tell from Van's photo collection that he is proud of his Vietnamese heritage and that he is well connected with the local Vietnamese-American community. Van views himself as Vietnamese-American, because even though he is an American citizen, he still has strong ties to his homeland and native culture. This self-identity causes him to live in two worlds. In one, we see Van as an American by the way he dresses. He wants to meet other Americans so he can learn how to study better and to improve his English skills. He indicates that his American friends are for studying and his Vietnamese-American friends are for socializing, giving rise to his feelings of cultural isolation. In the other world, the portrait shows some fatigue around his eyes. This is due in part to the Vietnamese portion of his identity. Van works hard to provide for his family members who live with him: his mother, his siblings, and his niece. He is the oldest of the siblings, so he feels he must take care of them and watch over them. He works hard at his studies to provide a positive role model for the younger ones at home. Van's portrait also expresses fatigue because he cannot find a full-time job in his field of computers. He wonders if it is due to racism and a reluctance to hire Vietnamese-Americans. I also wonder if he is reluctant to leave the relatively comfortable and secure Vietnamese-American community to move himself and his family to another location in order to find a job. I can understand that it would be difficult to move away from the Vietnamese-American community that allows Van and his family the ability to remember their native homeland.

Van's portrait also shows an individual who is proud of his academic achievements. He acknowledges that he used his connections in the Vietnamese-American community to help him navigate the processes at MWCC, both at the downtown center and the main campus. He also relied on the ESL Director to provide him with much of his early heuristic knowledge and the ability to move through the system during his first semester at MWCC.

Overall, Van's portrait shows an individual who is proud of his achievements since arriving in the United States, but he is torn between the demands of his native cultural ties and the American culture.

Nancy's photos

Nancy, a very busy person, and the most assimilated of my six participants, shared more of her life off campus than her life on campus. This was due to her working full-time, having to care for her children and husband, and being on campus primarily for classes and no other activities. Nancy lives in and feels part of the American culture. The first photo shared by Nancy was a picture of the audience at her daughter's middle-school band concert. The audience was primarily Caucasians with a small number of African-Americans. There were no other Vietnamese-Americans in the audience except for Nancy's two children who were seated next to her and her American husband. She lives in an area populated primarily by Caucasians and feels comfortable attending her children's school functions and being out in the community. She speaks English very well with a minimal accent and feels that living in an area that is removed from the Vietnamese-American community has helped her achieve these language skills. As Nancy had stated in her interviews, she felt that being married to an American had helped

her learn English quickly. This also helped her become assimilated into the American culture.

Nancy also shared a photo of her work group at her office. She is standing in a group of six. Two of the six are Caucasian men, one woman appears to be from India, one man from Pakistan, and one woman is African-American. Nancy is one of only a small number of Vietnamese-Americans at her place of work. The photos from her classes at MWCC show similar images.

Nancy's classmates are primarily Caucasians but with a mix of ages because she attends evening classes. The study group that she met with before class was composed of Nancy and three Caucasian students. As Nancy had noted in her interviews, when she was at school, she focused on talking to American students to assist her in improving her English skills. Nancy noted that she avoided Vietnamese-American students because she did not want to speak Vietnamese. She preferred to work with American students while she was at MWCC. Since Nancy had a busy schedule, she did not attend any social activities at MWCC, so her photos were all from her classes or the study group before class. Even though Nancy talked to American students in her classes, she did not feel connected to MWCC.

The individual photo of Nancy reveals a woman with an expression full of confidence and excitement for life. Nancy has dark brown, shoulder-length, straight hair; dark eyes; and a broad smile. She asked a co-worker to take her picture, so she is dressed in a professional-looking outfit consisting of a blouse, jacket, pants, and medium-heeled shoes. Her fingernails are well manicured. Nancy works in an office full-time, but her

eyes do not show fatigue; they show energy and a desire to move forward to get her tasks done.

Nancy is 46 years old, and has a husband and four children ranging in age from five to fifteen years. Nancy married her husband, who is American, three years after she arrived in the United States. She attributes this as a major driver in the development of her identity as an American rather than as Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American.

Nancy's portrait and other photos show a person who is a part of but also independent from the Vietnamese-American community. When Nancy first arrived in the United States, she lived in Lake City and was directed to the MWCC downtown center by some Vietnamese-American acquaintances. Once she was married and had moved away from the local Vietnamese-American community her ties to the Vietnamese-American community declined, and she found that she needed to rely on herself in order to navigate the main campus of MWCC. She had to learn about college processes on her own by reading or asking employees. As a result, Nancy believes that she relied on herself to create her own heuristic knowledge. These challenges may have assisted Nancy in becoming assimilated into the American culture and way of life and ultimately provided the look of confidence I see in her portrait.

Howie's photos

Howie was a student in Construction Management until the program was closed. His first photo is a picture of himself and his classmates at an open-house celebration of the completion of a house the students had been building. Howie is standing in front of the house with seven classmates and building partners. Howie is the only Vietnamese-American student; the others are all Caucasians. There are six males and one female

student in the group. Howie appears to be happy to be with the group. Pictures taken by a fellow student show Howie with two other students. The two students are laughing, but Howie looks confused; he explained that one of his friends had told a joke and he did not understand it. Another photo shows Howie with three other students. They are talking but again Howie seems confused. A later photo shows Howie looking away and off in the distance, obviously not listening to his friends.

Before the house was finished, Howie had taken some pictures of the work in progress. The pictures show Howie working alongside two other students. He indicated that they had been very helpful to him because they explained the day's instructions and helped him with developing his construction skills. He also took some pictures of students on the MWCC campus. These are American students who had let him copy their notes because he had trouble keeping up with the instructor. Howie mentioned that his photos are of American Caucasian students because the younger Vietnamese-American students avoided him since he was older, and they thought he was too traditional.

Howie asked a fellow student to take his picture just before the graduation ceremony at MWCC. Howie's portrait shows a young man who is 26 years old and works as a manual laborer to make ends meet. Howie works two jobs: in construction and as a semi-truck washer. His body shows the number of hours that he works each week. His hands are very rough, dry, and stained with grease. His eyes show evidence of fatigue from the demanding schedule. His hair is a bit long and hangs over his eyes, and is a light brown color. Howie is clean-shaven; and even though his clothing is not

expensive, it is neat. He is wearing colored twill pants that are a bit baggy, a long sleeved striped shirt, and tennis shoes.

Howie's portrait indicates how he views his ethnic identity. He is holding a magazine with Vietnamese text, sent to him by a friend in Vietnam. Howie views himself as Vietnamese and believes he will still see himself that way after he becomes an American citizen. Even though Howie sees himself as Vietnamese, he would like to assimilate and fit into the American culture. He tries to associate with Americans as friends but finds that he doesn't understand their jokes and other comments and thus feels like an outsider. Howie thinks he would have an easier time assimilating if he had arrived in the United States as a child rather than when he was 21 years old. Howie's portrait also shows an individual who sees Vietnamese-American families in the US losing contact with their native Vietnamese language and culture. On one hand, he sees that as a good thing because it suggests assimilation into American culture. On the other hand, however, he sees assimilation into American culture as a loss of Vietnamese culture.

Howie's sources of heuristic knowledge came primarily from sources external to the college, although he did have a relationship with the ESL Director. His external sources were local Vietnamese-American individuals who had attended MWCC and could tell him how to navigate the system. The ESL Director was an early internal source, and Howie also formed connections with American students in his classes, although the connection was primarily for help with college processes and not for socializing. These also did not appear to be long-term connections.

Even though Howie's portrait is of a person who wants to hold on to Vietnamese traditions, it also shows an individual who wants to be accepted and hopes to be rewarded in the future for his efforts today.

Ba's photos

Ba is a person who likes to observe the world around him, so he was excited about taking photographs of his world while attending MWCC. When Ba considered an event to photograph he chose his sister's birthday party. His photo is of his family at the party: his father, sister, brother, and nephew. Ba said this is an important picture because they had been his support network when he came to the United States, and they had helped him become successful at MWCC. He has another picture of his friends at the party. It is a picture of six Vietnamese-American men. Two of these friends accompanied Ba the first time he went to MWCC. His family and his friends have been important sources of heuristic knowledge for Ba.

Since Ba enjoys observing people, he has a number of photos of people at MWCC. One of his favorite ways to pass the time is to sit in the cafeteria and watch people. His photos show how students sit in isolated groups. He has photos of Caucasian students, African-American students, and Vietnamese-American students all in separate groups. While showing these photos, he reiterated his belief that people should not stay within their own groups. Ba feels they need to expand their communications and work with other types of people to improve their communities and their country.

Ba's next set of photos is of his clinical site for the nursing program. Ba was the only male in his clinical rotation, so he has pictures of only women, primarily Caucasian, with only two African-American female students. He also took pictures of some of his

general studies classes on campus. He took pictures of his instructors explaining the course material. On the back of one photo Ba wrote “much terminology, very hard.” He found these to be challenging classes, but also said that they were good for him because they, “open your mind.”

Ba’s last set of pictures from MWCC was taken in some of the student services areas. He took pictures of another Vietnamese-American student talking to staff members in registration, financial aid, and other areas. The photos show the frustration that Ba feels that Vietnamese-American students may face. The staff members are clearly having trouble understanding what the Vietnamese-American students want or need.

Ba’s portrait shows an image of a 46-year old man with a big smile on his face. Ba’s favorite expression is, “life is very good”. Ba is very serious about his studies and his future, even though he projects a casual demeanor. Ba has short, dark hair with a receding hairline, barely visible under a baseball-style cap. He is wearing a polo shirt, black jeans, and tennis shoes. He views himself as American and says he thinks as an American, although he notes that people who meet him for the first time typically consider him to be Vietnamese, due to his strongly Vietnamese facial features.

Ba enjoys talking to all types and ages of people, and he is very willing to share his ideas and cultural background. As a result, he did not feel that he has been the victim of racism. His outlook on life is that some uncomfortable things happen to all people, and he feels that if someone does not understand him, it is because they do not know about his country, and he tries to talk to them to help them understand. He believes that communication is a two-way street.

Ba has had support from his family and Vietnamese-American friends while he was learning about American culture. He also learned from his classmates and people that he worked with at his jobs. He appears to be well assimilated into the American culture, although his friendships are divided. He has American friends at MWCC for studying, he has friends at work for his time at work, and he has Vietnamese-American friends for socializing outside of school and work. These separate groups raise the question of whether Ba has actually moved into the American mindset and culture as much as he says he has. I wonder if life is really as good as he says, or is the “life is good” portrait only camouflaging feelings of cultural isolation?

Yumiko's photos

When I imagined how Yumiko's story would become a part of my imaginary photo album, I knew that her youth would be important. So, I would not be surprised to discover that Yumiko did not use the little recyclable camera that I might have given her to use. Instead, she took pictures using the camera in her cell phone and emailed her pictures to me. Since family is very important to Yumiko, the event that she selected to photograph was a family dinner. Her parents are at the dinner, as well as her aunt. The dinner food is one of her favorite Vietnamese meals. Yumiko's mother made the meal; Yumiko noted that she would like to learn to cook, and that maybe if she lived on her own she would learn. Yumiko mentioned that her parents are retaining their Vietnamese culture, and she noted that their primary focus is to provide resources for her to go to college. Yumiko wants to live on her own and wants to go away for her transfer studies, but she also is concerned about leaving her parents because they do not speak English very well.

The pictures Yumiko took while she was on campus at MWCC are primarily photos of students in her classes. This is because Yumiko does not spend extra time on campus in activities. She spends her time in class and occasionally in the writing center or the computer lab. The students in her pictures of her classes are all Caucasian students of traditional college age. Yumiko attends class during the day, so most of the students in her class are younger, traditional aged students. Yumiko identified the students whom she has become friends with, although she did mention that in some cases American students do not talk to her. She wonders if this is due to overt racism, or if it is due to American students not understanding people of other cultures.

Yumiko also took a picture of the ESL Director at MWCC. He was her original advisor and first connection to MWCC when he visited her local high school. He is still her advisor even though she does not take ESL classes anymore. She is comfortable with his style; she noted that he understands foreign students and different cultures.

Yumiko asked one of her Vietnamese-American friends to take a picture of her outside of the computer lab since she spends time in that room. After my study of Ba's portrait, as one of the oldest participants, the portrait of Yumiko, the youngest participant, is significantly different. Yumiko is 21 years old and has been in the United States only four years. Yet she appears to be well assimilated into the American culture. Yumiko's portrait resembles a typical traditional-aged American college student. Yumiko has long, dark, straight hair and dark brown eyes. She is slender in stature and wears blue jeans, a knit top, and a waist-length casual jacket. She carries her books in a backpack along with a small purse with a cell phone visible in an outer pocket. She is smiling and appears to be comfortable in her lifestyle. Yumiko is Chinese even though she was born in

Vietnam. As a result, her facial features show Chinese features rather than Vietnamese features. Yumiko is a quiet young woman, although once she is comfortable in a situation, she will express her opinions and feelings.

Yumiko's English is very good even though she sometimes has trouble understanding English slang used by classmates. She speaks three languages well: English, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Her use of three languages gives her a feeling of multiple identities. Even though she lives in the American culture very easily while at MWCC or at work, she lives in her native Chinese/Vietnamese culture at home with her parents.

Overall, Yumiko views herself as Chinese rather than Vietnamese or American. She has both American and Vietnamese-American friends; most of her Vietnamese-American friends are for socializing and her American friends are for studying and practicing English. Yumiko is holding on to some Vietnamese cultural values and plans to take care of her parents when she completes her education. It is not clear how much influence her Vietnamese-Chinese background frames her interactions with people. I wonder if the smiling young person is providing answers to go along with people to avoid conflict.

Yumiko is aware of cultural differences and also racial differences among her fellow students. She feels some racial tension when in classes for the first time, but she says these feelings may be due to students not understanding Vietnamese culture or knowing other Vietnamese-Americans. Is Yumiko experiencing racial prejudice in her classes? Is she not as willing to admit this to me, a Caucasian interviewer?

Yumiko relied on the ESL Director for her heuristic knowledge to help her navigate the system when she first arrived at MWCC, and she still relies on him for advice. She also had two Vietnamese-American friends who helped her when she first arrived at MWCC. Yumiko noted that she learned much about MWCC's processes on her own. Did she learn on her own because she did not want to cross cultural boundaries? Since Yumiko views herself as more Vietnamese-Chinese than American, I wonder if the person in the picture is trying to blend in with the American students to avoid clashes between the two cultures.

Pham's photos

The last participant in my imaginary photo album is Pham. It is evident that he had a hard time with this project – he does not have very many pictures in his collection. Pham's photos from his time at MWCC are limited. He needs to leave MWCC right after classes end to go home to take care of his younger brother. So, he only has pictures of some of his classmates in the auto body lab. They are all males and mostly younger, traditional-aged students. Since they are in lab, they are all in very casual clothing for working on the cars. Pham has one photo of three of his classmates outside of the building while on a class break. Since the instructors in his program took care of registration for students, Pham does not have any pictures of other areas of the college; he does not need to go to areas other than the auto body lab and an adjacent classroom.

Pham explains that since his father is having health concerns and his mother does not speak English, he needs to take care of his parents and his younger siblings. He sees himself as the caretaker of the family. Since Pham needs to leave campus immediately after classes end, he does not have time to socialize with other students in his program,

and he does not meet other Vietnamese-American students due to the campus location of his auto body classes. As a result, Pham does not think there are very many Vietnamese-American students at MWCC, and he does not have many social connections to the campus. He says that people at MWCC are nice and they are helpful, but his friendships are found outside of the college, within the local Vietnamese-American community.

Like the other participants, family is very important to Pham. His single photo of an event is a picture of his parents and his two younger siblings posing in front of their church after the Vietnamese mass. Even though his family members are dressed in American clothing, Pham reminds me that his parents have traditional Vietnamese values and that they do not allow anyone to speak English at home.

Pham asked his father to take his picture outside of their church after mass. This photo shows that Pham is a very charismatic 24-year-old. His jet-black hair is very neatly combed and he is clean-shaven. For the portrait, Pham is dressed very neatly in a short-sleeved collared shirt, twill pants, and leather shoes. His hands identify the type of work he does. Pham is majoring in auto body repair and works full-time at a local auto body shop, and his hands are grease-stained and rough.

Since Pham's parents both work and also expect Pham to work to help with the family finances, Pham attends MWCC on a part-time basis. The heavy load of work and school is evident in his eyes, even at his young age. Since his parents have traditional Vietnamese cultural values and do not allow English to be spoken in their home, Pham lives in two cultural worlds.

Pham's parents can't show him how to attend college, and he only makes minimal connections with staff at MWCC. He relied on some Vietnamese-American friends to

get him started and then had help from the ESL Director and his program faculty members. Pham is very bright and enjoys his job now. But he isn't able to clearly see what the future may hold if he could move forward with his own life.

The "family photo"

While each of my participants' photos are unique, there are underlying themes that run through them. In the family photo, six individuals are present, and there are commonalities among them. There are superficial physical commonalities, and there are the deeper and more important commonalities that emerged as part of my interview process. These common themes can be combined to produce a "composite photo" of their lives at MWCC. From a macro perspective, the composite photo shows a group of students who are or were successful academically at MWCC, yet they often did not make social connections. As a result they sometimes felt like "outsiders." They smiled and they were able to associate with people to acquire the knowledge that they wanted to gain, yet they also sometimes appear to have been traveling alone on their journeys. From a micro perspective, a variety of factors may give rise to their feeling of being outsiders. My interview results indicate two significant factors may be racial isolation and cultural isolation. The following discussion describes the elements of the composite photo.

As I interviewed each of my participants and studied their interview transcripts, one dominant discourse continued to emerge in their stories. That dominant discourse is the absence of a feeling of truly "belonging" at MWCC as a part of the college community. Each of my participants has their own voice and was willing to share their voice with me, but the sense of a collective voice was absent and it appears that a

collective voice of Vietnamese-American students on campus is missing or hidden. The two primary factors that appear to contribute to this situation are racial isolation and cultural isolation. This may be due to factors that are created by the college and some that are created by the students.

Racial isolation was expressed by four of the six (Van, Howie, Yumiko, and Ba) participants. Yumiko said, "Some students, like they have a little, like racial thinking. You're not American. You're not white. Usually, white people have a racial thing. Just the white people." Yumiko and Ba felt that they had overcome racism as they progressed through MWCC. They both expressed that as students began to know them better, they felt more accepted into the classroom environment. Ba stated, "they look you very strange, you know, usually I talk with them. In the future they know you more. They open with you more." Yumiko added, "They are laughing at your English. I think it just takes time. It takes time to get used to it. It is really hard to communicate with a different language, different culture." Yumiko and Ba both felt that as they move through future experiences, they will be able to overcome racism, whether explicit or implicit in the actions of others.

Howie and Van are still struggling with racism. They are experiencing this not only in the classroom, but also in the workplace, and how that may affect them in the future. Van noted, "it doesn't matter what country you from – they only understand their views. People don't tend to understand Vietnamese or Asian people." The two of them feel that Vietnamese-Americans will have difficulty acquiring high-level jobs and in moving up in the workplace due to racial bias as a result of language and cultural differences. Van noted,

I don't know. Because my Asian style, we don't get hired. Maybe it is, racist? Every time my application is turned down. They call me to interview a lot – but, I don't know why. I have a lot of skills. I don't know what is missing.

Howie expressed mixed feelings, “When I am at school here or at work, I don't feel like I am treated differently because I am Vietnamese.” But, when he discussed the Vietnamese-American as a population living in the US, he replied,

If you speak English as second language I don't think you can get to be a lawyer and business. If you are American, how many percent can be lawyer? If you have the language difficulty, it would be even harder to be successful.

Each of the four participants (Van, Howie, Yumiko, and Ba) indicated that problems come from fellow students, not the faculty. One interpretation of this is that my participants view the college as an institution that is not to be questioned, and is not in need of changes or improvements to serve students better. This indicated a traditional Vietnamese view of accepting how things are and not challenging the status quo. But American students are not seen as part of the institution. Instead, American students are like Vietnamese-American students. They are passing through as they develop skills and acquire new knowledge

But, I also wonder if my participants were more comfortable with revealing more about their experiences with students than with faculty because of their cultural backgrounds. Were they providing me with answers that they perceived that I wanted to hear? Are they expressing feelings of cultural isolation? As I reviewed the interview transcripts, it became apparent that if the term cultural was substituted for the word racist or racism, the conversations became more connected and coherent. My participants may not see a clear distinction between racial isolation and cultural isolation. Statements

indicating that Americans do not understand Asians or Vietnamese-American may indicate cultural differences more than racial differences.

Four of my participants appear to be wrestling with feelings of cultural isolation. These individuals would be Van, Howie, Ba, and Pham. These four individuals expressed that they find social outlets in situations outside of MWCC. Each of these individuals interacts with Vietnamese-American friends who do not attend MWCC or they participate in social activities connected to the Catholic Church that most Vietnamese-Americans in the local area attend. For example, Pham stated, "My family is involved in the celebration for the Vietnamese New Year. We come every year. With the Catholic Church. Vietnamese priest at church has mass at 2:00 that he does all in Vietnamese. He do both English and Vietnamese."

Each of these individuals indicated that their American friends are for studying, and that their Vietnamese-American friends are for socializing, as indicated by Van, "I have Vietnamese friends, but not for study." Does this connection to the Vietnamese-American population promote the retention of traditional Vietnamese cultural values? Does it limit their ability to assimilate into American culture?

Yumiko and Nancy did not appear to be struggling with cultural isolation issues as much as the other participants. Nancy married an American after her arrival in the United States and she noted that her friends are primarily American, such as people from work and neighbors. She also is the only participant who lives in an area populated by primarily Caucasians and native-born Americans. Yumiko is the youngest of the six participants and it appears she has been able to assimilate into the American culture more readily than the others due to her younger age. As Van noted, he believes that younger

Vietnamese-Americans are able to do more things than older Vietnamese-Americans. This appears to affirm his retention of Vietnamese cultural values. Yumiko and Nancy both noted the importance of practicing English. "You have to speak in English. The practice is very important," said Yumiko. Both said they did not want to speak Vietnamese while at MWCC, as Yumiko also noted, "I want to speak more English because I want to practice my English."

Yumiko has also been able to move away from another factor that Van and Pham may be struggling with. Yumiko arrived in the United States with her parents and none of her siblings. Since she does not have younger siblings here, she has been able to focus on her school studies without having to take care of younger siblings. When Yumiko was asked if there would be expectations to help if there were younger siblings at home, she replied, "Yes. I [would] need to take care of them. That's why I like being the youngest one at home." This is in contrast to Van and Pham who both appear to be shouldering more extensive family responsibilities. Both of them noted that they cannot spend extra time at the college because of family duties. As Van noted, "I have been taking care of family, so I don't have time. I just come in, study, have class, and go home." Van has his mother, sister, and niece at home; Pham has his parents and two younger siblings at home. Both are assisting with the family finances and care taking.

Van and Pham, along with Howie, are holding on to their Vietnamese ethnic identity more than the other three participants. Each of them identifies as being Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American rather than American. As Pham mentioned, "I have to remember my country." Pham and his siblings are not allowed to speak English

at home; this may contribute to his identity. All three of them socialize with Vietnamese-American friends while away from MWCC.

It is difficult to determine the boundaries between racial and cultural isolation for my participants; it appears that the two blend together to create an overall feeling of isolation at MWCC. All six of my participants have been able to achieve their academic goals, yet none of them has been involved in organized social activities on campus or appear to have developed lasting social connections as a result of attending MWCC. When my participants discussed the social aspect of their experiences at MWCC, they mentioned the absence of visible Vietnamese-American employees (faculty and staff) and the lack of a club or organization that they could participate in. Food was also mentioned as an issue; if they want to eat Vietnamese food, they need to bring their own or go off campus. All of the individuals discussed the ESL Director as someone who they relied on for help when they were trying to navigate through the college processes.

While the college appears to serve the academic functions for Vietnamese-American students, there appears to be a void in the arena of engagement or connections to the college on the social side. MWCC does not seem to exclude Vietnamese-American students, yet it appears there isn't much effort to be inclusionary. As a result, these students went through the process of attending classes, socialized with classmates on a limited basis, but looked for lasting social connections outside of MWCC.

Literature concerning retention and persistence of students indicates the importance of social activities to provide a sense of connection and engagement for students (Hurtado, 1999). The presence of an Asian or Vietnamese club could provide a vehicle for those students to share their culture with the college community as well as

with the surrounding metropolitan community. This connection can allow students to feel a sense of belonging and may create a desire to remain at the institution to complete the program of study. Most importantly, it would provide Vietnamese-American students with a voice and a presence in the college. This voice could provide a means of improving the college experience for all students at MWCC. It could also make the institution more inviting to Vietnamese-American students as well as other Asian-American students in the area.

The presence of one or more Vietnamese-American advisors, staff members or faculty members could also provide that sense of connection (Tierney, 1992). A club provides a formal type of social connection; a positive relationship with a staff or faculty member provides an informal social connection for students. The ESL Director at MWCC appears to be the primary connection of that type for Vietnamese-American students. The connections of my data to the literature presented in chapter two follows in the next section.

Connections to the Literature

This section discusses the data in relation to the literature presented in chapter two. The first section, common threads among the participants, discusses the characteristics and experiences that my six participants had in common with each other. The unique themes section discusses topics that were related to or expressed by only one, two, or three participants. The third section discusses heuristic knowledge and the five barriers that Vietnamese-American students may encounter as they work to develop heuristic knowledge.

Common Threads/Similarities among Participants

Four characteristics emerged as common threads among the six participants. First, each of these students traveled to the United States from their home country of Vietnam. Suzuki (2002, 1993) discussed the issues faced by immigrants in relation to the Myth of the Model Minority. He asserted that these individuals do not fit the role depicted by the myth due to the language and cultural challenges that they need to overcome. Kiang (1992) and Teranishi (2002) discussed the family demands placed upon these individuals by native cultural values. None of my participants has traveled an easy road to create their lives in the US. Some have supported their family members as well as themselves. They have each determined how much they will maintain of their Vietnamese culture while they also work to assimilate into American culture. They view themselves as Vietnamese more than as Asians and are resistant to the homogenization that Kiang, (1992), Rhoads et al. (2002), and Teranishi (2002) asserted was supported by the Model Minority Myth.

Second, as immigrants, each of the participants has needed to overcome the barrier of language. Each student decided to learn English to attend college and to improve their lives. Kiang (1992) discussed language not only as a barrier to success in college in general, but also specifically in terms of the selection of a major. Suzuki (1993) and Chun (1994) discussed the concern of advisors directing Asian-American students into jobs that require technical skills rather than linguistic or social skills. Each of my participants selected majors that were related to science, math or technical studies. The majors chosen (auto body repair, computer programming, accounting, technical studies/construction, nursing, and pre-medical/liberal arts) would require limited public

speaking. The selection of an academic major requiring limited English was the third common thread among my participants. None of my participants indicated whether their advisors had an influence on their choice of major.

The fourth common thread among my participants was that they were all first generation college students. Teranishi (2002) asserted that even though parental support may be present, immigrant students face social and economic challenges not confronted by native-born first generation Asian-Americans. Padilla (1991) asserted that while first generation students often need to gain their heuristic knowledge from sources other than their parents, they might be able to gain information from friends, high school counselors, or teachers. Students who have immigrated may not be able to gain heuristic knowledge before arriving on campus because they may not have these or other connections. As a result, they must gain their heuristic knowledge quickly when they arrive on campus. Each of my participants did have the advantage of having connections to the local Vietnamese-American population and they were able to learn about the campus before arriving, and Vietnamese-American friends who were familiar with the campus accompanied some to campus. Even with this support, they needed to acquire knowledge quickly and the connection with the ESL Director was crucial to that occurring.

Unique Themes/Differences among Participants

Three unique themes emerged from the research and interview process. First, only one participant (Nancy) lives in an area outside of the geographical region where the majority of Vietnamese-Americans live. Nancy married an American and has lived in a primarily Caucasian neighborhood for a number of years. She is the most highly

assimilated individual of the six participants. The other five participants are more strongly tied to the local Vietnamese-American community.

The second unique theme was related to the discussion of a Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) on campus and the students' sources of social activities. MWCC has an International club on campus, but Vietnamese-American student participation in this club is limited at best. Rhoads et al. (2002) discussed the potential benefits of an organization such as a VSA. These benefits included assisting in the identity development of students as individuals, and playing a role in reducing racism and discrimination on campus. Murguia et al. (1991) suggested campuses expanding on Tinto's (1973) social enclaves to include ethnic clubs, groups, and organizations. My data indicated that my participants were divided on whether a VSA at MWCC would be beneficial to Vietnamese-American students. Three students (Van, Howie, and Yumiko) said yes, Nancy said definitely no, and for Ba and Pham, the topic did not surface. Of the three students who said yes, Van and Howie indicated that a VSA club would be good for Vietnamese-Americans, but not for them because they were too busy for activities on campus and they indicated that they rely on their Vietnamese-American friends and the local church for their social activities. Yumiko, who also said yes, also looks to her Vietnamese-American friends for her social outlet. Nancy feels that Vietnamese-Americans need to socialize with Americans if they want to be successful in America. Ba and Pham expressed that they were too busy for social activities on campus and also looked to the Vietnamese-American community for their social activities. In summary, five of the six participants rely on the local Vietnamese-American community for their

social support, and one is well assimilated into the American community and is only slightly connected to the Vietnamese-American community.

The third unique theme involves the ethnic identity of the six participants. When participants were asked how they viewed themselves – Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American, or American – they offered a range of responses. Nancy and Ba see themselves as American. These are the two most highly assimilated individuals of the six participants. Two individuals (Van and Pham) see themselves as Vietnamese-American. These two want to remember their country and have strong ties to the local Vietnamese-American community. Howie sees himself as Vietnamese and he is maintaining traditional Vietnamese values. Yumiko is ethnic Chinese and was born in Vietnam; she sees herself as Chinese rather than Vietnamese. Although she also sees herself living in three worlds: Chinese, Vietnamese and American. She is fairly well assimilated into the American culture. These differences in ethnic identity and level of assimilation in American society appear to have bearing on how the six participants developed their heuristic knowledge and how well they navigated the barriers discussed by Padilla et al. (1997).

Heuristic Knowledge

Each of my six participants has developed their own personal level and form of heuristic knowledge, and each has utilized this knowledge to navigate through the processes of MWCC. Each student has successfully completed their program of study or is progressing through their program in a positive manner. Heuristic knowledge, as defined by Padilla (1991), is acquired through experience, not through textbooks. The learner acquires heuristic knowledge more rapidly with the assistance of a mentor,

advisor, friend, counselor, or other individual who has experience with the local situation. This knowledge is important because it facilitates social and academic integration and allows students to overcome barriers that may impede their development of theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom. Specifically, Padilla et al. (1997) identified four categories of barriers encountered by minority students: (a) discontinuity barriers, (b) lack-of-nurturing barriers, (c) lack-of-presence barriers, and (d) resource barriers. The following discussion will relate these four barriers to my findings concerning Vietnamese-American students at MWCC.

The Types of Barriers Encountered by Vietnamese-American Students

Padilla et al. (1997) identified four categories of barriers encountered by minority students in higher education. Since my participants were all non-native students who had traveled to the United States from Vietnam, I added the fifth barrier of language. Each of Padilla et al.'s (1997) four barriers has two-to-five subcomponents; the four barriers and their subcomponents are described next.

First, the discontinuity barrier has three subcomponents: transition from Vietnam to the US, learning to be on one's own, and difficulty coming to terms with the value of a job vs. the value of education. Padilla et al. (1997) identify the first subcomponent of this barrier as transition from high school to college or small town to urban area. Since all of my participants emigrated from Vietnam to the US, I have chosen to interpret the first subcomponent as transition from Vietnam to the United States.

Second, the lack-of-nurturing barrier has four subcomponents: lack of nurturing, lack of family support and understanding, lower expectations of the student by faculty or staff, and lack of minority role models. Third, the lack-of-presence barrier has five

subcomponents: lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum, lack of visibility of minority programs, cultural isolation, lack of minority role models or mentors, and racial isolation. Fourth, the Resource barrier has two subcomponents: lack of money and the financial aid system.

Discontinuity barrier.

Of the four barriers identified by Padilla et al. (1997), for Vietnamese-American students, the discontinuity barrier (Appendix F, Table F3) appears to be the driver in relation to whether a student will successfully develop and acquire heuristic knowledge. As noted earlier, my participants demonstrated a range of perceptions of ethnic identity. As an individual progresses through the transition from Vietnam to the US, they may have less difficulty in overcoming the other barriers to academic success.

Three participants (Nancy, Yumiko, and Ba) appear to have overcome this barrier or did not need to face it. These individuals embraced their new country and were motivated to fit in as soon as they could. They had family support to assist them with the transition, their motivation allowed them to take things in stride and become independent. They put education ahead of just having a job that would pay the bills because they wanted independence and a better life. Nancy and Ba see themselves as American and Yumiko sees herself as Vietnamese-Chinese-American.

Van, Howie, and Pham appear to have challenges that still exist with at least one or two of the discontinuity barriers. Van and Pham see themselves as Vietnamese-American and Howie sees himself as Vietnamese and they each appear to be maintaining their Vietnamese culture more than the other three students. In terms of learning to live on their own, Howie has no family in the US and has overcome this barrier, but Van and

Pham have family responsibilities that cause them to live within cultural parameters and to also remain place bound. In terms of valuing education over having a job, the three of them have stated that they value education, but all three are challenged with balancing the desire for an education and having a job.

Lack of nurturing barrier.

The lack-of-nurturing barrier (Appendix F, Table F4) involves the amount of family support a student receives as well as how much support they receive from other sources. It also addresses whether the student has a minority role model to learn from, and it asks whether faculty and staff at the college have lower expectations of minority students on campus. In my analysis of this barrier, my data indicates that only one student appears to have challenges with finding support and nurturing. Howie is the only participant who does not have family living near or with him. Howie noted that he has American friends but they are only for socializing, and Vietnamese-Americans who are born in the US do not want to socialize with him because they want to be considered to be American, not Vietnamese. Howie appears to communicate with classmates while in class, but not outside of class time. He took ESL classes and knew the ESL Director, but also wanted to move out of ESL as early as possible. As a result, he may have missed out on support from the ESL Director and other ESL faculty members. Thus, he may have felt like an outsider for much of his time at MWCC, and never getting truly socially integrated into the college culture. Howie wants to hold on to his Vietnamese identity and his identity may have caused him to lose out on some sources of support and nurturing while at MWCC.

Howie is also the only student who appears to be struggling with the lack of a minority role model. Howie has friends in the local Vietnamese-American community, although it is not clear whether these individuals provide any nurturing or role modeling for Howie. Howie has a perception that Vietnamese-Americans in America cannot get professional level jobs. He does not see any Vietnamese-American employees at MWCC and it appears that he does not see or know Vietnamese-Americans who have been able to move on to universities and get professional jobs. As a result, Howie appears to be struggling with the lack-of-nurturing barrier because of a lack of a Vietnamese-American mentor or role model.

The other five students appear to have been able to find support, nurturing and role models. They all have some type of family in the local area and they made long-lasting connections with the ESL Director. Three of them are fairly to highly assimilated into American culture and are beyond looking for Vietnamese role models and the other two are established in the Vietnamese-American community and can find support and role models in that environment.

One subcomponent in this barrier was not directly discussed by any of the participants. That was the barrier of lower expectations from faculty and staff. This may be linked to the Myth of the Model Minority coming into play on campus. Padilla et al. (1997) constructed the barriers and subcomponents after research with primarily African-American and Latino students, and very few Asian-American students. Could Vietnamese-American students find instructors to be helpful and friendly because the faculty has high expectations for the students due to the Model Minority Myth? This would be in opposition with the lack-of-nurturing barrier that infers that Caucasian or

majority faculty members may have lower expectations for minorities. Does this only apply to minorities such as African-American or Latinos?

Or, is there another factor at work in the research process? Even though the six participants are at varying levels of assimilation into American culture, did they still feel the need to “fall back” on their Vietnamese culture and indicate to me that faculty and staff were friendly and helpful because they grew up needing to respect authority? While the participants were comfortable talking about their families and the support they provide, they may not have wanted to mention anything negative about how they were treated by faculty and staff at the college due to my race or due to my perceived authority as a result of my position at the institution. As a result, my data may have a gap in regard to how Vietnamese-American students believe the faculty and staff at MWCC views them.

Lack of presence barrier.

The lack-of-presence barrier (Appendix F, Table F5) has five subcomponents: lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum, lack of visibility of minority support programs, cultural isolation, lack of minority role models or mentors, and racial isolation. The lack of minority role models or mentors has been addressed in the previous section, lack of nurturing. None of the participants raised the question of the presence or absence of minority issues or materials in the curriculum. This may be due partly because of the majors that these students have chosen to pursue. With the exception of Yumiko, these students are each pursuing programs that are two-year technical and career oriented. In these programs, there are a limited number of courses that are taken outside of their program area. The students may not have expected the

curriculum to include minority issues. Yumiko is in a transfer program, but has been taking many science courses, so again the focus is on the content and skills, not on minority or cultural concerns.

In the category of lack of visibility of minority support programs, Howie is the only one who appears to still find that to be a challenge. Nancy, Yumiko, Ba, and Pham did not indicate this to be a high priority, although Yumiko and Ba both indicated that some type of support might be beneficial. Van, Ba, and Pham have found support from other Vietnamese-American individuals through their church or other associations. Nancy and Yumiko are well assimilated into American culture and are not concerned with this type of support. Howie appeared to feel separated from other Vietnamese-American students on campus, and he may feel a need for a support group. No matter how these students felt about minority support programs, all felt that they were too busy to take advantage of them if these programs were available to them.

Nancy and Yumiko were the only two students who appear to have overcome cultural isolation. These two students are very well assimilated into American culture and can function very well within that culture. Van, Howie, Ba, and Pham each appear to have some struggles with feeling like outsiders from time to time. Their comments such as not being able to understand their friends' jokes, not really liking American food, and not having time to spend with friends on campus, seem to contribute to these feelings.

Feelings of racial isolation were perceived differently than cultural isolation. Van and Howie were the only ones to have noted the presence of racial isolation and to still be challenged with it. Both of these students feel their chances of moving into professional careers are limited due to the racial nature of the United States. Van and Howie both feel

that even if they can learn English very well, they will still have difficulty finding professional jobs that require speaking to individual clients, groups, or the public.

Yumiko identified some racial prejudice among American students, but she noted that these feelings typically disappeared once she was able to get to know the students. Her perceptions may have been described better as cultural differences rather than racial.

Resource barrier.

The resource barrier (Appendix F, Table F6) has two subcomponents: lack of money and the financial aid system. These two subcomponents will be discussed as one topic. Each of the participants traveled to the United States under their own unique circumstances. As a result, each student had his or her own unique concern about money and the ability to pay for college. In general, four of the students – Nancy, Howie, Yumiko, and Ba – developed a means to address paying for tuition and supplies and have overcome that barrier.

Nancy worked as a waitress first, and then acquired a better paying job. She was a part-time student and worked full-time. She married an American and was in a more stable financial situation. She did have struggles with the financial aid system; she had problems acquiring the information that she needed to apply for financial aid and found the process to be frustrating.

Howie has paid for his schooling by working many hours. He has been able to develop positive relationships with his employers that allow him to have time off to study for exams and to ensure that he is at class. Howie did not discuss financial aid in the interviews; he may not have attempted to apply for financial aid.

Yumiko lives with her parents. Her parents work and they are focused on her success and they provide financial assistance to her. Yumiko works two jobs, both part-time and limited numbers of hours each week. She is also able to adjust her hours to meet her school and study needs. Yumiko did not discuss financial aid in the interviews; she may not have attempted to apply for financial aid.

Ba has worked since he arrived in the United States. He has worked in a restaurant and in hospitals. He stated that Vietnamese-American students often rely on other Vietnamese-American students to show them how to apply for financial aid. Ba did not discuss whether he had applied for or received financial aid while at MWCC.

Van and Pham still appear to have concerns with money. Van lives with his mother, two siblings, a niece and his girlfriend. He works many hours to overcome the lack of money barrier to pay bills and support himself and his family. He felt that foreign students do not understand the financial aid system and they need help filling out forms. Van did not indicate that he had applied for, or received, financial aid from the college.

Pham indicated the need to pay his own tuition. He lives at home so he may not have to pay for housing. Pham has felt the need to work full-time to assist his family and to pay his tuition. He did not indicate that he had applied for, or received, financial aid from the college. At the second interview, Pham was concerned about his father's health. If his father cannot work, Pham may need to postpone his degree completion to help pay for family expenses. As discussed previously, Pham and Van may both be struggling with the role of dutiful son due to adherence to traditional Vietnamese values.

Language as a barrier.

Each of my participants realized that they needed to learn English-speaking skills well before they could earn college credits. Some of the participants had been exposed to English in Vietnam, but none of them felt they were ready to move directly into credit classes in the US. Their routes to learning how to gain access to ESL classes followed two pathways. Two of the six, Yumiko and Pham, were in high school before they attended MWCC. Both of them took the TOEFL test in high school and both met the ESL Director from MWCC while they were in high school. They both used the connection with the ESL Director to move from high school to MWCC. They had the ESL Director for an advisor for at least part of their time at MWCC. The ESL Director was their primary source of heuristic knowledge.

The other four, Van, Nancy, Howie, and Ba, had to gain connection to the ESL Director by another means. Each of them knew about the MWCC downtown center, and that it offered ESL. Each of them determined that the ESL taught there was not enough if they wanted to take college courses. Van was the only participant who took all of the ESL classes at the downtown center; Nancy and Ba each decided to move to the main campus instead of completing the downtown program first. These four participants were each connected to the ESL Director by an employee of MWCC. This may have been someone in advising at the main campus of MWCC, or someone from the downtown center. Ultimately, the ESL Director was the source of much of the heuristic knowledge developed by these four students.

Once the students were connected to the ESL Director, they all moved through ESL on the main campus until they were allowed to take credit courses. Overall, all six

participants were satisfied with their experiences in ESL at MWCC. All six participants noted that it was difficult to move from the ESL classes to the regular college classes at first. They each noted that the most important thing for new Vietnamese-American students coming to MWCC would be to learn and practice English. Each of the six participants identified English as one of their barriers at MWCC, but each also identified it as one of their successes at MWCC. As a result, each of the participants was able to overcome language as a barrier and was able to progress to their chosen field of study.

Since these students perceive the learning of English an accomplishment and success, can MWCC create an environment that celebrates this and also provides a benefit for other students? The college could recognize students who have successfully completed the ESL program by a small ceremony. This could be similar to the small-scale graduation ceremonies held for students who complete GED and short-term certificate programs. Interested program completers could be identified as ambassadors to provide an informal connection between the college and the Vietnamese-American community. They could function as peer mentors for Vietnamese-American students who are enrolling at MWCC for the first time. Programs such as these could increase the visibility of Vietnamese-American students on the MWCC campus while at the same time giving this group of students the opportunity to convert a challenge into a success story.

Conclusions Drawn from the Data

My task in this research project was to answer my primary research question, which was: *How do Vietnamese-American students develop and rely on heuristic knowledge as they progress through their experience at MWCC?* I had two secondary

questions to help guide my process: *Are Vietnamese-American students able to develop the heuristic knowledge needed to overcome barriers to their success as identified by Padilla et al. (1997)? How do Vietnamese-American students describe and explain their experiences at MWCC?*

My participants had their individual and unique experiences at MWCC, but each of them relied on two primary sources of knowledge as their primary sources of heuristic knowledge. These two sources were the local Vietnamese-American community and the ESL Director at MWCC. Five of the six participants arrived in Lake City without any family waiting for them. As a result, they needed to rely on the local Vietnamese-American community to help them navigate the city and its processes when they first arrived. It would appear to be a natural flow of events for the Vietnamese-American community to help them navigate to and through MWCC. New friends, and in one person's case (Ba), family members provided the first source of heuristic knowledge for these individuals. Once they found their way to the college, they were directed to and connected with the ESL Director. Some of them were connected to him quite quickly; others connected to him through a more indirect route. While these two sources of heuristic knowledge helped these individuals navigate the processes of MWCC, they may have also played a role in the feelings of isolation expressed by my participants. These two sources of knowledge may have allowed my participants to stay out of the mainstream of activities at the college.

As students in ESL, they moved through the program with the same students in their classes. Also, the ESL Director and other ESL instructors provided them with information about advising, registering for classes, and other college functions. As a

result, my participants may not have needed to seek out advice and guidance from other areas of the college. So, they were able to remain within the ESL group for their first years at MWCC. As they progressed to their selected program and general studies classes, they were still able to seek out the ESL Director for advice and guidance; some kept him as their official advisor. Did this prevent them from seeking out other staff members or faculty as sources of heuristic knowledge?

American students in their classes and their instructors functioned as secondary sources of heuristic knowledge. My participants expressed varying levels of involvement with their peers, noting that they would ask their classmates for help with studying or notes. In general, they did not socialize with their classmates outside of the college environment, or maintain long-term friendships. Instructors were described as helpful and friendly. None of my participants indicated any negative feelings towards any of their instructors. Were my participants avoiding any negative discussions concerning faculty because of their respect for instructors and authority? The most highly assimilated participant, Nancy, discussed frustrations concerning only staff, but not instructors. How much did my participants' ethnic identity affect how much I was able to learn concerning social integration and the heuristic knowledge gained from American students and their instructors?

In answer to my research question, Vietnamese-American students at MWCC appear to develop heuristic knowledge primarily through their Vietnamese-American connections and the ESL Director. Secondarily, they develop heuristic knowledge through American classmates and their instructors. As my participants explained their experiences at MWCC, their comments indicated more academic interactions than social

interactions. They appear to feel like outsiders and indicated they would like to see more Vietnamese-American or Asian employees and possibly a Vietnamese Student Association on campus. Their inability to fully develop social integration on campus appears to play a role in their development of heuristic knowledge. They appear to be sensitive to the cultural differences on campus and appear to choose to stay within the comfort zone of the local Vietnamese-American community and their Vietnamese-American friends.

Implications for MWCC and other Colleges

My study provided a view of life for six Vietnamese-American students at a comprehensive community college in the Midwest region of the United States. The participants in my study expressed feelings of cultural and racial isolation while attending MWCC. This cultural isolation manifested itself as a low level of social integration. These six students have been successful in their academic pursuits. They were resilient and able to create the necessary connections needed to create enough heuristic knowledge to navigate the college processes. How many other Vietnamese-American students have entered MWCC and have not been able to develop enough heuristic knowledge to succeed and have left the college without attaining their goals? Teranishi (2002) noted the importance of understanding the wide diversity of Asian ethnic groups. As noted earlier, MWCC appears to provide academic support for these students, but social support and connections appear to be absent or weak. It appears to be imperative that colleges identify and understand the local Asian population in their community and provide connections to that population. They may consider hiring appropriate staff and faculty members who can be sources of heuristic knowledge for these students. They may

choose to provide an opportunity for the development of a student club appropriate to their local population.

Also, as Teranishi (2002) offered, it is important for college personnel to understand that all Asian individuals do not fit the stereotype of model minority. This appears to be especially true for individuals who are non-native. These individuals require different support mechanisms than third or fourth generation Asian-Americans. As Garner (1989) stated, many of these support mechanisms are similar to those needed by other minority students.

If a college elects to serve the needs of its non-native Vietnamese-American students, they may find that they also enhance the service provided to students in other minority groups. A college may accomplish this by turning what may be perceived as a challenge into an opportunity. Each of my participants identified their perception of living in multiple identities due to culture and language. As they walk on the campus – in the hallways, classrooms, and gathering areas such as the cafeteria, library, or computer labs – the college may gain significant information concerning how to improve the quality of experience not only for these students, but also for all students. College officials could communicate with these students individually or through the use of focus groups to discover how these students view the campus. Vietnamese-American students could reveal unidentified issues dealing with campus ecology as identified by Strange and Banning (2001).

A college campus is often designed to serve a large number of students. As the number of minority students increases, colleges should work to make the physical environment one that minority students can connect with. Vietnamese-American

students could assist in identifying elements of the college campus that make them feel excluded rather than included. Other minority students may also perceive these elements as exclusionary. This process could also be used to identify college practices that may not promote inclusion. An example could include gathering information concerning how the community college is perceived by, and connected to the local Vietnamese-American population in regards to providing service to that population. Overall, the multiple identity lenses that Vietnamese-Americans use to view their world may prove helpful to all students at MWCC or other colleges.

Recommendations for Future Research

I have shared and described the stories of six Vietnamese-American students, however, unanswered questions remain. These unanswered questions may offer opportunities for further study, as indicated below.

Opportunities for both qualitative and quantitative studies exist for community colleges with Vietnamese-American or other Asian populations. Qualitative studies could include phenomenological research examining the relationship between Vietnamese-American students and American students. My participants were all first generation Vietnamese-Americans. A comparison could be made between the experiences of first generation and second-generation Vietnamese-American students in community colleges. Do second generation Vietnamese-Americans have different experiences at community colleges? Narrative inquiry could be utilized to understand the life stories of other Asian immigrants (i.e. Cambodia, Laos) at community colleges. Do they describe experiences similar to those of Vietnamese-American students?

Since the local Vietnamese-American community plays an influential role in the experience of Vietnamese-American students at MWCC, a quantitative survey could be utilized to determine how the Vietnamese-American community perceives the community college. A qualitative study could be used to follow-up and expand on the results of the survey.

Self-Transformation and Reconstruction

As I interviewed my participants and analyzed the interview data, I realized that not only was I forming images of my participants' experiences at MWCC; I was also recreating my own image of myself. As I reflected on my research project, it became apparent that it was a continuation of a journey that started when I was an undergraduate college student. As my researcher perspective describes, I have known and interacted with Vietnamese-American students in a variety of ways: as a student and teaching assistant peer, as a community college teacher, and as an academic dean. My research project continued my journey. As I interviewed my participants, I learned about their experiences and gained a more developed understanding of how this group of students at MWCC may perceive the college environment and their place in it.

As I listened to them and as I read and re-read the transcripts, I also reflected on the commonalities of their experiences compared to my own experiences in college. Since none of them had parents who had attended college in the United States, my participants were first generation college students, as I was. They needed to find a source of information to help them proceed through the early college processes such as registration and advising, just as I needed to do. For my participants, that source was the ESL Director and for me it was a counselor. They faced many of the same challenges

that I faced, such as the need to work and as a result, not being active on campus. As a result, they felt disconnected and isolated on campus, as I had often felt. They are resilient individuals willing to overcome their challenges to attain their goals, as I have been. This self-reflection has given me a more enriched appreciation for what this group of students, as well as others in the community college, currently faces on a day-to-day basis. As a result, I now look at students in the hallways with a different lens – one that is more enhanced than before I embarked on this research journey.

The research project itself was also a transforming process for me as an individual. As a student who avoided research because I did not think I could carry out such a lengthy project, this experience demonstrated that I could accomplish the task. There were moments of frustration and anxiety along the way such as when I received messages from potential students who were declining the request to participate, or the need to reschedule interviews and feeling as though I would never finish. A large piece of the process was learning to accept that my research project would occur more at its pace than at my anticipated pace. I learned to appreciate the value of taking time to reflect on people's words, and to wait for the meaning to come to me in its own time. This process has enriched my abilities to process and analyze situations both professionally and personally.

As I worked with my data to deconstruct and reconstruct my participants' stories, I found that my own perception of the world has been deconstructed and reconstructed as part of the research process. This journey will have an impact on how I perceive the world around me and how I function both professionally and personally.

Conclusion

The findings of my study are specific to the students who participated in my study. The results should not be generalized beyond this level. It is important to note that some students who were invited to participate in the research process declined to do so. The reasons for this self-selection were not clear. Were the six participants who accepted the invitation more highly motivated and academically successful than those who declined? Were they more comfortable with their identities and personal goals? The self-selection process may have had implications for the data that I collected. I may not have reached an important subpopulation of the Vietnamese-American student population, the students with problems. Those who declined may represent a population that the college or a future researcher should attempt to reach. Is the college in danger of losing them before they complete their degrees?

Most importantly, the findings should not be generalized in regard to other Asian-American populations of students. The primary purpose of this study was to uncover the sources of heuristic knowledge for Vietnamese-American students at a comprehensive midwestern community college. As discussed, the sources of heuristic knowledge for my participants are primarily their Vietnamese-American connections and the ESL Director. Secondly, they develop heuristic knowledge through American classmates and their instructors.

As my participants answered my interview questions and discussed their experiences at MWCC, as I analyzed the interview transcripts and worked to follow Clinchy's (2003) process of deconstructing and reconstructing stories, it became evident that I also gained from this project. As a researcher, I gained a perspective on the

academic and social integration of these students while at MWCC. As an administrator, I gained an appreciation of the need to examine college processes to verify that they are inclusionary for all students on campus and serve the variety of needs as best as the college can. As an experienced instructor, I gained new insight into the challenges faced by Vietnamese-Americans and possibly other minority students as they attend college. As an individual and a first-generation student, I related to the obstacles faced by these students as similar to those I faced. Taken together, these experiences have raised my consciousness concerning this group of students. The next time I see or talk to a Vietnamese-American student, how will I behave? I will be better equipped to serve them as students and as individuals.

While answers to the research questions were being sought, another purpose came to light. This study provided the opportunity for the voices of a silent campus community to be heard. The six participants, who may feel like outsiders on their own college campus, were allowed to tell their stories and to have those stories written down on paper. It is my hope that their stories will provide guidance to future educators and students.

References

- Alvarez, A.N. & Yeh, T.L. (1999). Asian-Americans in college: A racial identity perspective. In Sandhu, D.S. (ed.), *Asian and Pacific Islander Americans: Issues and concerns for counseling and psychotherapy*. (pp. 105-119). Commack, NY: Nova Science publishers, Inc.
- Bagasao, P.Y. (1989). Student voices breaking the silence: The Asian and Pacific American experience. *Change*, November/December, 21, 6, 28-37.
- Bennett, C.I. (1990). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brand, D. (1987). The new whiz kids: Why Asian Americans are doing so well and what it costs them. *Time*, 130, 42-46.
- Caplan, N., Whitmore, J.K., & Bui, Q.L. (1985). Economic self-sufficiency among recently arrived refugees from Southeast Asia. *Economic Outlook USA*, 12(3), 60-63.
- Cabrera, A.F. & Nora, A. (1994). College students' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination and their feelings of alienation: A construct validation approach. *The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, 16, 3-4, 387-409.
- Chan, K.S., & Hune, S. (1995). Racialization and panethnicity: From Asians in America to Asian Americans. In Hawley, W.D. & Jackson, A.W. (eds.). *Toward a common destiny: Improving race and ethnic relations in America*. (pp.205-233). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Chase, S. E. (1996). Personal vulnerability and interpretive authority in narrative research. In Josselson, R. (Ed.). *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives. Volume 4*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chun, K. (1977/1994). The myth of Asian success and its educational ramifications. In D.T. Nakanishi & T.Y. Nishida (Eds.). *The Asian American educational experience*. (pp. 95-112). New York: Routledge.
- Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clinchy, B.M. (2003). An epistemological approach to the teaching of narrative research. In Josselson, R., Lieblich, A., & McAdams, D.P. (Eds.). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dauite, C. & Fine, M., (2003). Researchers as protagonists in teaching and learning qualitative research. In Josselson, R., Lieblich, A., & McAdams, D.P. (Eds.). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- DeBonis, S. (1995). *Children of the enemy: Oral histories of Vietnamese Amerasians and their mothers*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Garner, B. (1989). Southeast Asian culture and classroom culture. *College Teaching*, 37(4), 127-130.
- Harmon, P. & King, D. (1985). *Expert systems*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Josselson, R. & Lieblich, A. (2003). A framework for narrative research proposals in psychology. In Josselson, R., Lieblich, A., & McAdams, D.P. (Eds.). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Kiang, P. N. (1992). Issues of curriculum and community for first-generation Asian Americans in college. In Zwerling, L. S. & London, H., (eds.), *First-generation students: Confronting the cultural issues*. (pp. 5-11). *New Directions for Community Colleges*, No. 80, winter. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kibria, N. (1993). *Family tightrope: The changing lives of Vietnamese Americans*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kim, H., Rendon, L., & Valadez, J. (1998). Student characteristics, school characteristics, and educational aspirations of six Asian American ethnic groups. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 26, 166-178.
- Lee, S.J. (1994). Behind the Model-Minority stereotype: Voices of high and low-achieving Asian American students. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 25, 4, 413-429.
- Lee, S.J. (1996). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Leung, P.K. & Boehnlein, J. (1996). Vietnamese families. In McGoldrick, M., Giordano, J. & Pearce, J.K. (eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy*. (pp. 295-306). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Leung, P.K., Boehnlein, J.K., & Kinzie, J.D. (1997). Vietnamese American families. In Lee, E. (ed.), *Working with Asian Americans: A guide for clinicians*. (pp. 153-162). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (2003). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. (pp. 253-291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lowe, L., (1996). *Immigrant acts: On Asian American cultural politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Makaroff, J. (1967). America's other racial minority: Japanese Americans. *Contemporary Review*, 210, 310-314.
- Mathews, J. (2005, March 22). Some Asian-Americans say colleges expect more from them. *Washington Post*, p. A10.

- Mayo, J.R., Murguia, E., & Padilla, R. (1995). Social integration and academic performance among minority university students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 36, 6, 542-552.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education – revised and expanded*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Second edition. California: Sage.
- Murguia, E., Padilla, R.V., & Pavel, M. (1991). Ethnicity and the concept of social integration in Tinto's model of institutional departure. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32, 5, 433-439.
- Okutsu, J.K. (1989). Pedagogic "hegemonicide" and the Asian American student. *Amerasia*, 15 (1), 233-242.
- Opp, R.D. (2002). Enhancing program completion rates among two-year college students of color. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 26, 2, 147-163.
- Padilla, R.V. (1991). Assessing heuristic knowledge to enhance college students' success. In Keller, G., Deneen, J., & Magallan, R. (eds.), *Assessment and access: Hispanics in higher education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Padilla, R.V. (1994). The unfolding matrix: a technique for qualitative data acquisition and analysis. In Burgess, R. G. (Ed.), *Studies in qualitative methodology*, 4, 273-285.
- Padilla, R.V. (1999). College student retention: focus on success. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 1,2, 131-149.
- Padilla, R.V. & Pavel, D.M. (1994). Using qualitative research to assess advising. *The Review of Higher Education*, 17, 2, 143-159.
- Padilla, R.V., Trevino, J., & Gonzales, K. & Trevino, J. (1997). Developing local models of minority student success in college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38, 2, 125-135.
- Pamphilon, B. (1999). The zoom model: A dynamic framework for the analysis of life histories. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5 (3), 393-410.
- Pavel, D.M. & Padilla, R.V. (1993). American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary departure: An example of assessing a mainstream model using National Longitudinal Data. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 32, 2, 1-23.
- Phinney, J.S. & Chavira, V. (1995). Parental ethnic socialization and adolescent coping with problems related to ethnicity. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 5(1), 31-53.

- Pinnegar, S. & Daynes, J.G. (2007). Locating narrative historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In Clandinin, D.J. (ed.) *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. California: Sage.
- Rhoads, R.A., Lee, J.J., & Yamada, M. (2002). Panethnicity and collective action among Asian American students: A qualitative case study. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43, 6, 876-891.
- Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. California: Sage.
- Ruefle, W., Ross, W.H., & Mandell, D. (1992). Attitudes toward Southeast Asian immigrants in a Wisconsin community. *International Migration Review*, 26(3), 877-898.
- Rumbaut, R.G. (1999). Assimilation and its discontents: Ironies and paradoxes. In DeWind, J., Hirschman, C., & Kassinitz, P. (eds.). *Becoming American, America becoming*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Rutledge, P.J. (1992). *The Vietnamese experience in America*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Sanchez, I.M. (2000). Motivating and maximizing learning in minority classrooms. In Aragon, S.R. (ed.) *Beyond access: Methods and models for increasing retention and learning among minority students* (p. 35-44). *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 112, 35-44.
- Siu, S.F. (1996). Asian American students at risk: A literature review. Report no. 8. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk.
- State Department of Education (2004). Community Colleges Fall 2004 Credit Student Enrollment Report. December 2004.
- Strange, C.C., Banning, J.H. (2001). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Suzuki, B.H. (1989). Asian Americans as the "Model Minority": Outdoing whites? Or media hype? *Change*, 21, 6, 13-19.
- Suzuki, B.H. (1993). Higher education issues in the Asian American community. In *Minorities in Higher Education*, pgs. 258-285. Washington, D.C.: ACE/Oryx Press.
- Suzuki, B. H. (2002). Revisiting the model minority stereotype: Implications for student affairs practice and higher education. In McEwen, M.K., Kodama, C.M., Alvarez, A.N., Lee, S. & Liang, C.T.H. (eds.). *Working with Asian-American college students* (p. 21-32). *New Directions for Student Services*, no 97. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Takaki, R. (1989). *Strangers from a different shore: A history of Asian-Americans*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Teranishi, R. (2002). The myth of the super minority: Misconceptions about Asian-Americans. *The College Board Review*, 195, 17-21.
- Terenzini, P.T., Springer, L., Yaeger, P.M., Pascarella, E.T., & Nora, A. (1996). First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. *Research in Higher Education*, 37, 1, 1-22.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Drop out from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 1, 89-125.
- U.S. Census (2000). <http://factfinder.census.gov>, acquired September, 2005.
- U.S. Department of Education, (2004). <http://www.used.gov>, acquired November, 2004.
- Varon, B.F. (1967). The Japanese Americans: Comparative occupational status, 1960 and 1950. *Demography*, 4, 809-819.
- Yin, X. H. (2000, May 7). The two sides of America's "Model Minority". *Los Angeles Times*, p. 1.
- Yow, V. R. (1994). *Recording oral history: A practical guide for social scientists*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zhou, M. (1997). Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 63-95.

Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

My name is Cynthia Bottrell. I am a doctoral student in the Community College Leadership Program at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. I am currently writing my dissertation on Vietnamese-American students' experiences at Midwestern Community College (MWCC), part of the Heartland Community College District (HCCD), both names are pseudonyms. You have been selected as a potential participant in this study and if you decide to participate, I would like to interview you for 1 to 1 1/2 hours on a date and a time that is mutually agreeable to both of us. You will also be asked to participate in a second interview in order to clarify points made in the initial interview. This second interview would be approximately 1 hour in length.

The questions asked will focus on your experiences while you have been a student at MWCC. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to during the interview session. Your name will not be used in my dissertation, and any information that is obtained related to this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and disclosed only with your permission. Your decision to participate will not affect your future relationship with MWCC. Rather, it is with great hope that your participation in this study will assist community college leaders gain a greater knowledge and understanding of Vietnamese-American students' experiences at MWCC.

If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at anytime. If after reading this letter, you decide to participate in my study, please fill out the attached participant profile sheet. Also, please indicate your agreement to participate by contacting me directly by email at cbottrell@xxxx.edu or at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by signing this letter below and dropping it by my office (Arts and Sciences Division Office, room XXXX, XXXXX campus).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the above e-mail or telephone number.

Thank you for your assistance on this project.

Cynthia Bottrell

Appendix B
Participant Profile Sheet

1. Name _____

2. Gender

Male _____ Female _____ Age _____

3. Are you currently a student at MWCC?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Educational Status

Finished One Semester _____ Second Year (completed two semesters) _____
Third Year _____ Beyond Third Year _____

5. Degree Sought/Transfer Coursework

Associate of Applied Sciences _____ Liberal Arts _____ Transfer _____

6. Degree Major _____

Briefly explain why you chose this major: _____

7. Enrollment Status

Part-Time _____ Full-Time _____

8. Have you ever left MWCC for a period of time and then returned to complete your course of study since you first enrolled at the college?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, for how long? _____

9. Highest grade-level obtained by your mother _____ and by your father _____

10. Number of siblings _____ **Please list ages of siblings** _____

11. Number of step-siblings _____ **Please list ages of step-siblings** _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. What is your primary purpose for attending Midwestern Community College (MWCC)?
2. Please describe your experiences in the classroom at MWCC.
3. Please describe your experiences outside the classroom at MWCC.
4. What has been your experience with your own peers (same race, other minority students, and non-minority students)?
5. What has been your experience with the professional staff (advising, student services, business office, financial aid, and library) and administrators at MWCC?
6. What kinds of activities are you involved in when you are not in classes?
7. What does it mean to you to be Vietnamese-American (male or female)? What is your understanding of racism/prejudice? Have you had any experiences at MWCC that you would attribute to racism/prejudice?
8. What have been your greatest barriers and challenges? How have you overcome those barriers and challenges?
9. What have been your greatest successes at MWCC?

Appendix D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be in a research study of Vietnamese-American students' experiences in a multi-campus Midwest community college district. You were invited as a possible participant because you are a Vietnamese-American student at this institution. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

If you agree to be in this study, I, Cynthia Bottrell, will ask you to do the following things:

Complete a brief survey concerning background information. You will also be asked to complete a one-on-one interview that will last approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours. A second interview will be scheduled (within 1 week or so of the first interview) to clarify information given in the initial interview. This second interview will last about one hour in length.

The record of this study will be kept private. Any type of report that is published will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records including tape recordings will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. Tape recordings will be erased at the end of three years.

The benefits to participation are that you will contribute to the understanding of Vietnamese-American students' experiences at this institution.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with this institution. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

You may ask any questions you may have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact Cynthia Bottrell (XXX-XXX-XXXX, cbottrell@xxxx.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk with someone other than the researcher, contact Office of Institutional Review Board and Human Subject's advocate line 970-491-1563.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____

Date _____

Appendix E
Letter of Cooperation

October 10, 2005

Dear Cynthia:

This letter follows my meeting with you on October 10, 2005.

I understand that you have proposed to complete a narrative inquiry study of Vietnamese-American students' experiences at Midwestern Community College (MWCC). Data for your qualitative study will be collected through interviews of 6-10 Vietnamese-American students from MWCC, perhaps some observations, and document analysis.

You informed me that the Program Director of the MWCC English As A Second Language (ESL) will assist you with the selection of your participants for your study. The ESL Program Director will pass the information about your study to student(s) who then will contact you indicating his or her interest for participating. As a back up plan and if you do not identify an adequate number of participants, you will use a flyer introducing your study. You will post flyers in the designated area(s) of the college announcing the study and requesting participation. Potential participant(s) will be invited to contact the ESL Program Director for information about your study. The Program Director will request potential participants to contact you.

After considering the research proposal you outlined, I am convinced that I am familiar with the scope of the project and that persons you will interview will be adequately protected as human research subjects. I understand that the participation by any participants will be completely voluntary. Your interviews will take place on campus at a location away from your office. MWCC will share its public documents relevant to your study, and we will provide you with private locations to interview participants.

Please accept this correspondence as a letter of cooperation for your Human Subjects review process.

Sincerely,

Dr. XXXXXXX XXXXX
MWCC President
xxxxx@xxxx.edu
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
C: Dr. Cliff Harbour

Appendix F

Table F1 - Profiles of Participants – Personal and Cultural

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Attended college in Vietnam?	Highest grade-level obtained by mother	Highest grade-level obtained by father	Number and ages of siblings
Van	Male	No	6	5	4 (30-45)
Howie	Male	Yes	7	7	4 (30, 24, 20, 18)
Nancy	Female	No	12	12	8 (ages not given)
Yumiko	Female	No	High School (12)	High School (12)	2 (29, 24)
Ba	Male	Yes	Elementary school	Middle school	5 (50, 48, 46, 44, 42)
Pham	Male	No	High School	High School	2 (13, 14)

Table F2 – Profiles of Participants – Related to Education at MWCC

Name (pseudonym)	Enrollment Status	Degree Major	Degree Sought/Transfer	Educational Status	Continuous enrollment at MWCC?
Van	Part-time	Computer Science	AAS, then transfer	Beyond third year	Yes
Howie	Full-time	Technical Studies (Construction Management), AAS	AAS, then transfer	Beyond third year	No, left for 2 years
Nancy	Part-time when attending	Accounting	AA, Transfer, Accounting	Beyond third year	No, multiple times, 1 or 2 years at a time
Yumiko	Full-time	Undecided	AA, Transfer, Liberal Arts	2 nd year (completed 2 semesters)	Yes
Ba	Part-time	Nursing	AAS, Liberal Arts/Transfer	Beyond third year	Yes
Pham	Part-time	Auto Body Repair	AAS	Third year	No, left for 2 years

Table F3 – Discontinuity Barrier

Name (pseudonym)	Transition from Vietnam to US	Learning to be on your own	Difficulty coming to terms with the value of a job vs. value of education
Van	P	P	O
Nancy	O	O	O
Howie	P	O	P
Yumiko	O	O	N/A
Ba	O	O	O
Pham	P	P	P

Note. O = Overcame barrier; P = barrier is still present; N/A = barrier was not an issue or challenge to student.

Table F4 – Lack of Nurturing Barrier

Name (pseudonym)	Lack of nurturing	Lack of family support and understanding	Lower expectations of student by faculty or staff	Lack of minority role models
Van	O	O	N/A	O
Nancy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Howie	P	P	N/A	P
Yumiko	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ba	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pham	O	O	N/A	O

Note. O = Overcame barrier; P = barrier is still present; N/A = barrier was not an issue or challenge to student.

Table F5 - Lack of Presence Barrier

Name (Pseudonym)	Lack of minority issues or materials in the curriculum	Lack of visibility of minority support programs	Cultural isolation	Lack of minority role models or mentors	Racial isolation
Van	N/A	O	P	O	P
Nancy	N/A	N/A	O	N/A	O
Howie	N/A	P	P	P	P
Yumiko	N/A	N/A	O	N/A	O
Ba	N/A	N/A	P	O	O
Pham	N/A	N/A	P	N/A	O

Note. O = Overcame barrier; P = barrier is still present; N/A = barrier was not an issue or challenge to student.

Table F6 – Resource Barrier

Name (pseudonym)	Lack of money	Financial aid system
Van	P	O
Nancy	O	O
Howie	O	O
Yumiko	O	N/A
Ba	O	O
Pham	P	N/A

Note. O = Overcame barrier; P = barrier is still present; N/A = barrier was not an issue or challenge to student.