

Our HMoob American College Paj Ntaub

The Center for College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is currently partnering with the HMoob American Studies Committee (HMASC), a student-led initiative at UW-Madison that advocates for HMoob American students' needs, to conduct a Community-Based Participatory Action Research Project examining the campus inclusion, educational success, and post-college transitions of HMoob American college students.

U.S. colleges and universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion to general student success and a healthy campus climate. As a result, institutions of higher education across the country have begun implementing numerous measures to improve and advance diversity and inclusion, such as recruiting and advancing more faculty of color, creating bias reporting systems, supporting identity-specific campus organizations or spaces, and bringing speakers to campus to discuss issues of diversity. Despite these efforts, students with minoritized identities still continue to face hostile campus climates involving microaggressions, marginalization, and expectations of assimilation to majority-based cultural norms. These issues likely play a significant role in the educational success and post-college outcomes of minoritized students, as well as the existence of a welcoming, equitable, and socially justice educational environment.

“Our HMoob American College Paj Ntaub” adds to our understanding of issues of inclusivity and belonging in higher education as well as the role of inclusivity and belonging in educational success and post-college trajectories by qualitatively examining the educational experiences of a particular minoritized population at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution. Specifically, through a Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) partnership with a HMoob (also spelled Hmong) student organization on the UW-Madison campus, we examine the institutional factors (i.e. campus climates, student services, courses, and policies) that influence the campus inclusion, educational success, and post-college transitions of HMoob American college students at UW-Madison. And, we also investigate potential mechanisms for improving those factors.

What is Paj Ntaub?

Paj ntaub is a colorful, geometric, and intricate embroidery traditionally created to decorate clothes and to communicate short messages. After the U.S. wars in Southeast Asia, HMoob people started producing a new form of paj ntaub in the refugee camps that depicted the trauma, displacement, assimilation, and resilience HMoob refugees experienced during these wars. “Our HMoob American College Paj Ntaub” is a symbolic way to continue this art form and pay homage to this history by sewing a new collective story about higher education

