

Gender Theory and Cultural Considerations in Understanding Hmong Homicide-Suicide

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Abstract

Homicide-suicide is when a perpetrator kills an individual(s) and then subsequently dies by suicide. In the United States, homicide-suicide accounts for approximately 1,000-1,500 deaths per year, primarily in the context of spousal relationships. Intimate partner homicide-suicides occur as the result of an actual or impending relationship breakdown, bringing emotional strain to surviving individuals and their communities. This paper uses the theoretical framework of male sexual property to examine how traditional gender roles and marital practices are conducive to Hmong homicide-suicide. The increased frequency of Hmong homicide-suicide have challenged the Hmong's acculturation in understanding and addressing gender-based violence. The paper discusses two case examples of Hmong intimate partner homicide-suicide (IPHS) to highlight the marital practices and gender role expectations among the Hmong culture. While Hmong have made considerable progress both collectively and individually, gender-based violence connects to and is addressed based on traditional collectivist values and beliefs. The discussion focuses on addressing homicide-suicide facilitators as they relate to the integration and advancement of Hmong in western society.

Keywords: Hmong, homicide-suicide, gender based violence, male sexual property, male sexual proprietariness theory

Introduction

A homicide-suicide is when a person commits murder and then dies by suicide afterward (Marzuk, Tardiff, & Hirsch, 1992; Manning, 2015). In the U.S., homicide-suicides occur at an estimated rate of 1,000 to 1,500 each year, and a majority (68%) of homicide-suicide victims are women (Violence Policy Center, 2018). Other victims include men, children, and coworkers. Perpetrators of homicide-suicides are primarily men who displayed symptoms of depressive and

anxiety disorders and were triggered by socioeconomic risk factors such as family conflict and financial distress (Oliffe et al. 2015; Flynn, Gask, Appleby, Shaw, 2016). Marzuk, Tardiff, and Hirsch (1992) created a widely used classification system based on victim-offender relationships. Homicide-suicides can fall under a) spousal murder-suicide, b) filicide-suicide, c) familicide-suicide or d) extrafamilial-suicide (Marzuk et al., 1992). This paper concentrates on spousal murder-suicide, also known as intimate partner homicide-suicide (IPHS).

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide

Like homicide-suicides, intimate partner homicides are committed mainly by men using a firearm against their spouse (Allen, 1983; Cohen, Llorente, & Eisdorfer, 1998; Palermo, 1994; Liem, Barber, Markwalder, Killias, & Nieuwbeerta, 2010; Violence Policy Center, 2018). Between January 2017 and June 2017, IPHS (65%) was the United States' most prevalent form of homicide-suicide (Violence Policy Center, 2018). It is common for IPHS perpetrators and victims to share a legal marriage or common-law union (Harper & Voigt, 2007; Liem et al., 2010; Manning, 2015; Knoll & Hatters-Friedman, 2015; Regoeczi & Gilson, 2018; Zeppegno et al., 2019). The average age of a perpetrator is between 34-45 years, and the average age of victims is between 25-35 years (Harper & Voigt, 2007; Panczak et al., 2013; Manning, 2015; Sturup & Caman, 2015; Regoeczi & Gilson, 2018). Other demographic factors and descriptors reported for IPHS are the place of incidents, socioeconomic status, educational level, history of violence, and history of mental illness and substance use (Roma et al., 2012; Carretta, Burgess, & Welner, 2015; Flynn, Gask, Appleby, & Shaw, 2016). One study examined whether perpetrators of IPHS intended to commit murder or suicide first. The primary intent to commit suicide or homicide varied among young (18-44), middle (45-59), and elder (60+) age groups.

Young or middle-aged offenders hold primary intentions to commit murder, while elder-age offenders were suicidal (Salari & Sillito, 2015).

There is a consistency in IPHS characteristics across national studies, including the United States, Sweden, Japan, and China (Zeppegno et al., 2019). However, there is limited information about how the perpetrator's ethnic and cultural background factors into IPHS perpetration. One study compared IPHS incidents committed in Israel to those committed in Western countries. The study found that ethnic minority groups impose traditional norms and constraints on intimate partners, thereby increasing the risks of IPHS (Dayan, 2018). Similarly, Hmong impose cultural and social constraints on intimate partner relationships and gender roles. Therefore, it is important to examine whether these constraints influence how Hmong combat gender-based violence, possibly leading to the continued occurrences of IPHS. Intimate partner homicide-suicide is a form of gender-based violence occurring within a family dynamic. This paper explores how longstanding Hmong marital practices and gender roles lead to an increased risk of IPHS.

Hmong Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide

Since the Hmong migrated to the U.S., homicide-suicide cases have occurred. Homicide-suicides among Hmong couples are well-documented in the media across the Midwest and California (Lemoine, 2012). Recently, there has been an increase in reports of Hmong IPHS in the media between 2017 and 2019. Nearly all reported Hmong homicide-suicide cases in 2019 were intimate partner-related (Lopez, 2019; Juarez, 2019; Weniger, 2019), where men murdered their intimate partners and then died by suicide. A study of domestic violence-related homicides in 23 states across various Asian ethnic groups lists the latest recorded rates of Hmong homicide-suicide. Between 2000 and 2005, there were 15 confirmed cases of Hmong IPHS (Dabby, Patel,

& Poore, 2010). The perpetrators and victims were husbands and wives through a legal or cultural marriage. Current literature suggests that when there is an actual or imminent breakdown in the relationship, the risk of homicide-suicide increases (Salari & Sillito, 2015). The existing literature, however, has not explored homicide-suicide among Hmong partnerships, and studies rarely consider possible culture-related risk factors. Hmong murder-suicides could be a result of fracturing traditional Hmong culture, since women, who are supposed to be subservient to the expectations of their husbands, are now empowered by the laws and ideals offered by Western society to assert independence (Lemoine, 2012). Further analysis of the constraints and expectations that ethnic cultures place on interpersonal relationships and gender roles is needed. Also, to understand why Hmong men have resorted to committing murder-suicides, it should be explored why Hmong men feel a profound sense of shame, remorse, and emotional distress when divorced (Evans, Scourfield, & Moore 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Male Sexual Proprietariness Theory

Recent contemporary literature has used prior feminist theoretical frameworks to examine homicide-suicide within specific classes and societies, arguing that power is the fundamental principle of patriarchy. Men use violence as a tool to dominate women when power is distributed unequally between men and women, with male dominance becoming oppressive and lethal for women (Corradi, Marcuello-Servós, Boira, & Weil 2016). This explanation also reflects why there is a history of domestic violence among most IPHS perpetrators. The act of killing their intimate partner and dying by suicide provides a means for the perpetrator to take control of the situation. In addition, the male sexual proprietariness theory explains how men in certain societies justify killing their intimate partners. The male sexual proprietariness theory states that

when men marry their wives, they are purchasing her productive and reproductive capacities; thus, men have control over their wives' wellbeing (Serran & Firestone, 2004). Previous studies have combined male sexual proprietariness theory with general strain theory to analyze homicide-suicide cases (Harper and Voight, 2007). Murder-suicide cases related to male sexual proprietariness theory were the result of domestic conflict (divorce, infidelity) or abuse (intimate partner violence) (Harper & Voight, 2007).

Hmong culture is a complex culture described as patriarchal and oppressive to women (Ngo & Leet-Otley, 2011). Among Hmong men and women, marriage and gender roles have varied historically. Before the Hmong migrated to the United States, they viewed marriage between a man and a woman as essential, primarily for reproductive reasons. If a woman failed to conceive a boy, her husband was allowed to marry another wife. Although married Hmong men could court and marry multiple wives, if a married Hmong woman was unfaithful to her husband, she had committed a crime, and the husband was entitled to damages (Serran & Firestone, 2004). If a wife committed adultery, the proprietary man or husband considered it a violation of his rights and sought revenge towards her and her lover. When a society perceives marriage in this way, according to the male sexual proprietariness theory, men will commit homicide out of sexual jealousy. Today, Hmong in the United States no longer view marriage as primarily for "sexual and reproductive reasons" (Serran & Firestone, 2004). However, intimate partner relationships continue to be impacted by other practices such as men's polygamy, adultery, and the negative stigma of divorce. Cultural practices and beliefs of the Hmong resemble what studies have found regarding the male sexual proprietariness theory. Men have power and control over their wives based on longstanding patriarchal practices. Thus, it is

important to explore whether the increased incidence of Hmong IPHS between 2017-2019 is the product of the longstanding cultural construction of gender and marriage.

Hmong Culture

The Hmong constitute a collectivist, clan-based culture of 18 clans, distinguishable mainly by surname (Duffy, Harmon, Ranard, Thao, & Yang, 2004; Goodkind, 2006). Hmong trace their family lineage through the father following the patrilineal tradition, with individuals of the same clan (i.e., with the same surname) regarded as being related and addressed using an elaborated kinship system (Goodkind, 2006; Palasciano-Barton, 2018). Individuals become a part of a family lineage through birth or marriage. Hmong also retain a patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, and hierarchical social structure system (Xiong, Dauphin, & Weisfeld, 2018). Their ideology and belief systems emphasize male dominance, female submission, and the Hmong expect that with age comes greater respect (Goodkind, 2006, Xuefang, n.d.). Among traditional Hmong families, regardless of education level or socioeconomic status, the father is head of the household, and the mother is the caretaker (Vang, 2016).

Hmong Gender Roles

In the U.S., despite many social and economic progressions by the Hmong, Hmong families still maintain traditional gender roles, such as the eldest male in the clan holding the most authority. In each household, a man's role is to maintain his family's good social and spiritual status in the community. In Laos, Hmong men provide for their families and maintain authority in their homes. Hmong women must fulfill the responsibilities of a good wife to her husband and his family. Her ability to respect her parents-in-law, be hospitable, follow traditional customs, and have children reflects positively on her husband (Xuefang, n.d.).

Women and children are subordinates to the husband and should act in ways that reflect positively on the husband's role and status in the community.

In the U.S., although not strictly enforced, many Hmong families still expect men and women to adhere to these gender roles. More progressive Hmong, however, are moving away from traditional gender roles and fighting for gender equity. For instance, many Hmong families do not expect only the husband to be the provider and are not only supporting their sons to achieve higher education. As a result, terms such as "provider" and "breadwinner" have shifted from being exclusively gender related. Hmong are making significant progress in Western society as they achieve higher-tiered careers, education, and social class (Vang, 2016). Hmong women are becoming economically self-sufficient by seeking a college education and employment outside the traditional female roles (Park, 1998). These advances have led to significant role reversals between the husband and wife among many Hmong families. Today, despite how common role reversals are becoming, many Hmong elders and traditional Hmong families still grapple with the change. Thus, gender inequity continues to challenge Hmong women academically and socially (Vang, 2016).

Men who adhere to rigid views of gender roles and masculinity are more likely to use violence against a partner (Courtenay, 2000). These values and belief systems bring significant influence upon an individual's behavior, and their actions often lead to unfortunate outcomes. Violence against women emerged from the preservation of ideas surrounding male privilege and control (Jewkes, 2002). Hmong men are, without a doubt, privileged in the Hmong community. Women are at a disadvantage because men have more political and economic power (Symonds, 2014; Keown-Bomar & Vang, 2016). Age and gender are also associated with higher authority. Hmong men, therefore, believe that they have control over the physical and spiritual wellbeing of

their wives. In Hmong culture, intimate partner abuse demonstrates love, and murdering one's intimate partner is a means to upholding and exerting one's authority. This socially constructed belief becomes further reinforced by cultural practices that take place during Hmong marriage ceremonies.

Hmong Martial Practices

The Hmong term to describe marriage is *yuav pojniam*, which translates to 'to buy a wife' (Symonds, 2014). Marital kinship relationships are crucial for strengthening family ties, political or economic gains, and cultural preservation (Meredith & Rowe, 1986; Lee, Xiong, & Yuen, 2006). Hmong marital practices encompass a long and complicated history of culture and traditional way of life (Lee et al., 2006). As the Hmong assimilate and acculturate themselves within Western culture, the circumstances in which Hmong marriages take place have also changed (Meredith & Rowe, 1986; Mouavangsou, 2008; Keown-Bomar & Vang, 2016). In the past, Hmong would marry under the circumstances such as elopement, mutual consent, arranged marriage, or bride capture (Meredith & Rowe, 1986; Vang & Bogenschutz, 2011). The culturally accepted age for marriage was as young as 13, often referred to as child marriages (Lee et al., 2006; Vang & Bogenschutz, 2011). Influence from western culture and laws have altered these circumstances to be less common today.

Physical and spiritual connection. A Hmong marriage creates a bond between the husband and wife, as well as their families and clan. During a marriage ceremony, the groom's family performs a *hu plig* (soul calling) ceremony to ritually welcome her spirit into their home (Symonds, 2014). Once the wedding ceremony is complete, the woman is spiritually removed from the household of her birth family and spiritually added to her husband's household. Subsequently, ensuring that her husband and his family are responsible for her physical and

spiritual wellbeing both in life and death. Physically and spiritually, a married woman takes her husband's clan identity and becomes a member of his clan. The woman can no longer use her name nor her former clan identity and will only be called "wife of [husband's name]" (Lemoine, 2012). Extended relatives will advise the newlyweds to live a decent life together to create harmony between the individual *hmoov* (destinies/fate) of the husband and wife.

Bride wealth. One of the most controversial aspects of Hmong weddings is bride wealth, also referred to as *nqi mis*, *nqi nog* (the debt for milk and burden) (Xuepang, n.d; Symonds, 2014). The bride wealth is a monetary gift given to the bride's parents by the groom in exchange for the food and care provided by the maternal parents, binding a woman to her husband and his lineage for her lifetime. Under this pretext, Hmong have often referred to the bride wealth as the bride price (Meredith & Rowe, 1986; Moua, 2017). Hmong traditions posit that the bride wealth is also a monetary gift or "nurturing charge" from the groom to express his gratitude for the parents' efforts in raising their daughter (Symonds, 2003). A Hmong marriage becomes legitimized only when the groom pays an agreed-upon bride wealth to the bride's parents (Goodkind, 2006).

Although many Hmong families still practice the exchange of bride wealth, there has been a persistent push by many Hmong to do away with this practice. Some argue that the bride price is the most significant enabler for violence against married Hmong women. Paying the bride price can be equivalent to exercising abuse, as it does not take the bride's feelings into account (Lemoine, 2012; Symonds, 2014). Because there is an exchange of bride wealth during the marriage ceremony, this signifies that men have ownership over their wives, and she is their property. A woman's rights to her fertility, sexuality, and reproduction are passed from her birth family to the family of her husband after marriage (Xuefang, n.d.; Symonds, 2014). Hmong men

hold a desire to control after death, as explained by a Hmong remark, “If I cannot control you in life, I will certainly control you in death.” The established spiritual relations and exchange of the bride wealth during a marriage ceremony demonstrates that control by Hmong men is not only physical but also spiritual.

Divorce. Among Hmong, the current divorce rate is just over 3%, compared to about 35% among the general U.S. population (Vang, 2016; Center for Disease and Control and Prevention, 2017). In closed Hmong communities, shameful situations such as divorce can become widely known, generate unnecessary attention, and lead to a sense of shame for the parties involved (Lemoine, 2012). There is a social stigma associated with a divorce between a Hmong couple because there are great spiritual and cultural expectations attached to the marriage. For Hmong women, once married, they cannot go back to their families, cannot give birth in the home of, nor can they die in the home of their parents (Lemoine, 2012), making marriage a unidirectional experience. Such acts would disturb and disrespect the spirits of her birth family.

Hmong individuals reside and function within a system where kinship prevails over all social relationships (Lemoine, 2012). A successful Hmong marriage signifies a stable kinship between the couple’s respective clans; thus, when marital problems (i.e., infidelity) arise, they are mediated to preserve the partnership among the two clans. Hmong families also highly value their reputation. Many women in abusive marriages were “shamed into silence” and forced to remain with their abuser to prevent tarnishing the reputation of her family and clan (Ngo & Leet-Otley, 2011). There are great efforts to avoid a divorce before the husband’s clan allows for the couple to separate. Even after an abusive incident, the clan advises the couple to remain together, and a support system is put in place to help the couple overcome long-term challenges (Her &

Heu, 2003). The husband is also informed to seek advice and assistance from his wife's extended family if he considers her not to be a good wife (Meredith & Rowe, 1986).

Today, Hmong couples in the U.S. must navigate between two separate gender and marital conflict systems: the traditional Hmong system and the Western U.S. system. Western approaches to addressing marriage disputes (i.e., child custody, restraining orders, alimony) may be culturally inadequate due to the spiritual connections established during a marriage ceremony. Upon her death, a Hmong woman's soul becomes a single dyadic spirit with her husband's soul (Symonds, 2014). Western divorce methods cannot break her spiritual bond with her husband and his clan. Nevertheless, as Hmong progress in their professional and educational endeavors, they familiarize themselves with the mainstream Western divorce process. Today, before or even instead of consulting the clans about divorce, many Hmong couples turn to the Western court system because mainstream culture offers Hmong women equity (Ngo & Leet-Otely, 2011). A Hmong marriage was created based on verbal contracts and agreements between the two families and their larger clan systems, thus resolving marital conflicts outside of the traditional Hmong system derails the resolution process. Still, the prior verbal agreements have no grounds in the U.S. courts (Her & Heu, 2003). Hmong men are unable to use traditional Hmong practices when resolving marital discord and must adhere to the Western court standards.

Although women instigate a separation more frequently than men, both men and women face social repercussions from going through a divorce (Brinig & Allen, 2000). A patriarchal society views divorce and estrangement initiated by women as the husband's loss of control over his wife and his position as head-of-household (Liem & Koenraadt, 2018). For men, to experience shame means experiencing a lifelong sense of social rejection and disapproval from others. Hmong women also face negative stigma, ridicule, and marginalization from their

immediate family, extended family, and the community. Hmong women report that they chose to remain in an unhappy or abusive marriage for reasons such as their children, to preserve the reputation of their families, and avoid the social stigma of being labeled a divorcee (Keown-Bomar & Vang, 2016). When life events like partnerships have cultural significance and expectations, the probability of violence increases; hence, people will take extreme measures to fulfill these cultural and societal expectations.

Hmong Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Cases

The following cases were recent IPHS incidents that took place in California. With approximately 91,224 Hmong reported in the 2010 census, California has the largest Hmong population in the United States (Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, & Yang, 2012). The information discussed in each case is from the news report of the incidents. This paper explores each case under the context of male sexual proprietariness theory to emphasize possible influence from Hmong marriages and gender roles. The names of the cases have been changed.

Case of Lang Xiong and Mai Vue. In March of 2015, Lang Xiong carried a firearm into the workplace of his estranged wife, Mai Vue. He shot and killed her in the office and died by suicide immediately afterward (Hoggard, 2015). There are speculations around what Mr. Xiong's motives were following the homicide-suicide. There were reports after the homicide-suicide that Ms. Vue married Mr. Xiong when she was very young, making her a child bride. Many Hmong couples married early on during their teen years. In this case example, IPHS cases can involve intimate partners with a long-established relationship built on cultural beliefs and practices. Intimate partners with a long history of partnership have much more to lose when the relationship ends.

As a result of a relationship breakdown, a man will murder his partner. Mr. Xiong and Ms. Vue were already separated when the IPHS occurred. Ms. Vue had an outstanding restraining order against Mr. Xiong. It is also common for Hmong IPHS incidents to occur during an actual or impending divorce. Seeing a marriage breakup as failure puts a negative stigma on Hmong men and their *txiv neej yawg* (manhood). They choose suicide due to an affliction towards their pride, or because they face difficulties in coping with life events (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Evans et al., 2016). According to the male sexual proprietariness theory, the practice of a Hmong man paying the bride wealth gives him proprietary control over her wellbeing. The man will resort to murdering his intimate partner when he has lost his control over her physical wellbeing due to separation.

Case of Peng Cha and Gao Lee. In October of 2019, Peng Cha shot and killed his wife, Gao Lee, at their home and then died by suicide by shooting himself (Luttrell, 2019). In a news interview, their daughter reported that her parents had marital issues relating to infidelity before the IPHS (Granda, 2019). The infidelity was between her father and another woman. The gender role of a Hmong man as head of the household warrants his wife to be *siab ntev* (patient) by not challenging his actions or decisions. Moreover, Hmong men's infidelity is culturally accepted and gender specific. For reproductive and lineage purposes, Hmong men can marry multiple wives, and participate in romantic relationships even though they are married. In contrast, if a married Hmong woman engages in a romantic relationship, the action entitles her husband to damages, often in the form of monetary payments. According to the male sexual proprietariness theory, in societies such as the Hmong, a husband is also entitled to use violence to engage in revenge against his wife if she has wronged him.

Although polygamy is less common and not openly practiced in the U.S. today, infidelity by Hmong men is often overlooked, mostly by other Hmong men. It is unclear exactly why Mr. Cha murdered his wife and then died by suicide. However, their marriage was rooted in marital strife, which is also common among Hmong marriages, resulting in a tragic IPHS. Although the infidelity was on Mr. Cha's behalf, his act of murdering his wife further illustrated his belief and perceptions that, culturally speaking, he made the decisions and had the final say over her physical wellbeing.

Male sexual propritarieness theory explains two factors that are present in Hmong homicide-suicides: gender roles and marital practices. Homicide-suicide in the Hmong community has been a longstanding recurring issue and has become more prevalent in recent years. Hmong homicide-suicides have, in some cases, left families and clans in turmoil because of the many unanswered questions and allegations. Hmong IPHS has gained media attention over the years and has been recognized as a form of gender-based violence among the Hmong community, prompting a push for intervention and prevention efforts that take into consideration cultural traditions and expectations. Understanding the increase of Hmong homicide-suicide over the years involves considering the cultural contexts in which they have occurred. There is more to learn about how Hmong historical practices are being challenged and changed in Western society.

Moving Forward: Progress and Change

Historically, Hmong have overlooked gender-based violence by tolerating and allowing for Hmong men to perpetuate verbal and physical aggression towards their wives (Vang & Bogenschutz, 2011). *Ntaus poj niam* (wife-beating) is the closest phrase to describe domestic violence in Hmong, and this phrase applies to acts of violence against a woman, not against a

man (Her & Heu 2003). Hmong men will discipline their spouses for behaving in socially undesirable ways, so abusing one's wife as an act of discipline is deemed necessary (Her & Heu, 2003; Symonds, 2014). There were overwhelming reactions from the Hmong community about how best to assist domestic violence victims following the occurrence of Mr. Xiong's and Ms. Vue's case (Hess, 2015). When a society refuses to adapt its cultural practices, it maintains a society where abuse and gender inequalities are justified. Since men are the main perpetrators of IPHS, the values and perceptions surrounding a Hmong man's role in his society will influence him to murder his spouse.

Intergenerational gaps in social structures and gender roles continue to disrupt Hmong families and Hmong culture (Palasciano-Barton, 2018). These cultural expectations and values must correspond to future generations of Hmong in light of acculturative and assimilation to a host society whose norms and practices differ greatly. It is hard to change the customs and beliefs embedded in a static system of a close-knit society that has lasted over many centuries (Lee et al., 2006). The challenge faced by many is to adjust and adapt without losing the traditional culture that historically defined the Hmong. Gender relations are inseparable from cultural traditions (Xuefang, n.d.). Ultimately, homicide-suicide is an extreme consequence of persistent enforcement of traditional practices in modern society.

It is beneficial to develop more knowledge about the distribution of tasks, attitudes, responsibilities, power, and material possessions among men and women in a complex culture and the symbolic or prestigious values that the group attributes to them (Donnelly, 1994). To better implement prevention efforts and address cases of IPHS, the role of Hmong men should be considered and well understood. Creating gender equality does not mean removing Hmong men's long-held leadership roles in their families and communities. Developing a gender structure and

parity of roles is about allowing women to also have a say in the decisions that affect their wellbeing. Intimate partner homicide-suicide can be preventable if individuals within and outside the community understand these familial and societal dynamics. Researchers and helping professionals should consider the Hmong's traditional practices, their experiences both before and after migration, and understand the importance of a Hmong men's identity among their family and community.

Conclusion

Intimate partner homicide-suicide is the most common type of homicide-suicide and remains largely unresearched as it occurs among ethnic minorities. Guided by the male sexual proprietariness theory, this paper discussed intimate partner homicide-suicide perpetrated by Hmong men against Hmong women; more specifically, intimate partner homicide-suicides as these relate to the Hmong's past and future progress in the United States. As Hmong continue to maintain and teach about cultural practices in order to preserve the Hmong culture, addressing gender-based violence will involve gender roles and martial practices as critical points of discussion. Further progression and change within the Hmong community should focus on more effective and culturally appropriate ways of addressing gender-based violence, including intimate partner homicide-suicides.

The incidents of Hmong IPHS involving Lang Xiong, Mai Vue, Peng Cha, and Gao Lee illustrate the current state of intimate partner homicide-suicide in the Hmong community and how IPHS may occur under traditional beliefs and practices. Additional research using in-depth qualitative and quantitative methodologies can validate and help explore additional factors relating to the perpetration of Hmong IPHS. It will also help to bring attention to the magnitude of the problem by maintaining a count of Hmong homicide-suicides occurring in the U.S.

Unfortunately, IPHS continues to take place despite the significant progress the Hmong have made over the past 45 years. Progressive work with the Hmong community should focus on cultural beliefs surrounding gender roles and how cultural marital practices are ultimately interpreted and understood. Hmong IPHS analyses should occur within their own social and cultural structure. Such analyses will help clarify what ultimately drives Hmong men to murder their spouses and then die by suicide and place emphasis on culturally appropriate intervention and prevention efforts.

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