

# Uncovering Embodied Community Cultural Wealth: *Hung dee moy* Brings Forth New Possibilities

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## Abstract

In this paper, educators unpack their community cultural wealth, also known as *hung dee moy* 同姊妹, a Toisanese-Chinese sisterhood support system. I narratively inquire alongside my participants Felicia and Mary, uncovering their embodied experiences of *hung dee moy* knowledge, passed from their mothers to them and onto the next generation. In attending closely to their experiences as expressions of *hung dee moy*, their narratives illuminate the interconnections between micro and macro contexts, showing how patterns of race-based exclusion and interpersonal and institutional racism affected generations of Toisanese. Participants highlight the power of *hung dee moy* to cultivate collective strength through intergenerational resistance. This paper discusses the process of uncovering generational wealth and holds the possibilities of others articulating their ancestral knowledge.

## Background

I sat with my participants Mary and Felicia at the research table again. Felicia asked me to research her mother's *hung dee moy*, a sisterhood. Both Mary and Felicia's mothers were from Toisan and subsequently worked together as cannery laborers. I shared the prior research interview transcripts with them and explained it was likely Felicia and Mary had their own *hung dee moy* sisterhood. I asked them, "did you learn how to create a *hung dee moy* sisterhood from your mothers?" Mary completely disagreed with my offering and immediately responded, "No, I don't think we're *hung dee moy*." Then, Felicia leaned forward across the table, looking Mary directly in the eyes, "No Mary, we are *hung dee moy*." (Paraphrased from field notes, April 10, 2017)

And so began our inquiry into Felicia and Mary's experiences of their mothers *hung dee moy* to better understand through unpacking the stories they carried. *Hung dee moy* 同姊妹, or Toisanese clan sisterhoods, are a relational support network characterized by Lee in his book, *The Eighth Promise* (2007). *Hung dee moy* sisters can be born into the sisterhood or married into the sisterhood; they do not have to be blood related but are linked through the family. Regardless of how one joins the sisterhood, one's membership into the *hung dee moy* is never revoked—it is a permanent relation. Loyalty bonds within the *hung dee moy* are crucial. They are as strong as familial bonds; in fact, they redefine family. This article explores a specific type of *hung dee moy* in the diaspora and mainland and offers readers an opportunity to explore their own community cultural wealth.

Educators like Felicia and Mary bring important knowledge and insights “that are not learned in their formal schooling, but instead emerge from their own histories, families, and communities as community cultural wealth (CCW)” (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018, p. 11). Documenting complex familial knowledge is important to name and share because the invisibility of CCW is pervasive and often the untold perspectives, experiences, and histories would remain shrouded in silence (Passos DeNicolò et al., 2015, p. 232). Hence, the articulation of CCW is crucial since it names the assets and strengths of all peoples. Moreover, CCW research identifies the contributions within the experiences, skills, and knowledge practices. In this study, I explore the *hung dee moy* practices that are a part of Felicia and Mary’s CCW. These stories are a part of Felicia and Mary; they are a living part of their relationship. Their story may resonate with some of your own CCW, including relational practices or intergenerational stories. It is the expressed hope of both Felicia and Mary that each of us can unpack the CCW treasures we carry. Yet, it is important to note that these CCW stories are culturally and historically specific to a time, place, and people; they are a part of Felicia and Mary.

In fact, exploration of this sacred sisterhood is timelier than ever with the rise of anti-Asian hate in the form of scapegoating, perpetual foreigner stereotypes, and increased violent attacks on Asians and Asian Americans (Sawchuck & Gewertz, 2021). Unless researchers begin to document the vast collection of often overlooked embodied CCW knowledge, Asian American educators and other educators of color will continue to be framed in deficit (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). The more we can articulate and preserve Asian American CCW, the more we can make visible such assets and treasures, actively countering deficit frames. Urgency frames this study as these ancient *hung dee moy* CCW practices are not written. By the third and fourth generations, more and more Toisan American daughters of the diaspora know less and less about *hung dee moy*. A lack of articulation of these practices and lack of documentation of how these practices are embodied are lost with each generation. The purpose of this study is to reveal the *hung dee moy* knowledge of Felicia and Mary’s embodied treasures woven and expressed in their narratives. Examining these participants’ experiences helps to create a portrait of their individual and collective intergenerational agency and makes visible an ancient practice that is still in use today.

Narratives capture experience and can be a means through which embodied knowledge is articulated into language (Craig et al., 2017). Using narrative inquiry is a good way to explore such experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) because it “is part of a research genre that can uncover multiple elucidations of knowing” (Craig et al., 2017, p. 331). In fact, at the heart of narrative inquiry is a relational ethic; the researcher—deeply human, genuine, respectful, and in relationship to the participants—explores significant and meaningful aspects of the participant’s lives (Kim, 2016, p.103). Thinking with stories is relational, and researching with participants can bring forth CCW-embodied knowledge. These CCW narratives serve as a counternarrative, told from an asset perspective, reframing dominant narratives and challenging deficit myths. Using critical theory as a lens to see the dialectical relation between structure and agency, I interrogate how the participants’ experience *hung dee moy* and how such practices resist structural oppression. By articulating and revealing institutional oppression, we can recenter educators of color assets (Yosso, 2005). Given this context, I narratively inquire alongside Felicia and Mary, exploring their experiences of their mothers *hung dee moy* and the possibility of their own *hung dee moy*. This work deepens insights into the community cultural wealth of Asian America and the

process of unpacking such knowledge. Through sharing this journey, I seek to make the embodied wisdom of *hung de moy* visible. I do so because we must claim our place and push against the “historic erasure” of Asian American contributions (Sawchuck & Gewertz, 2021).

This project seeks to serve as a proactive representation, allowing Felicia and Mary to characterize their own community cultural wealth as Asian Americans. Additionally, I seek to expand the types of recorded *hung dee moy* practiced within a new context of the United States. I start by sharing William Poy Lee’s characterization of *hung dee moy* as he recounts his mother’s experiences with her mother’s *hung dee moy* in China.

## Hung Dee Moy 同姊妹

Hung Dee Moy as a cultural practice came from the Toisan region (台山), also known as Hoisan, or Taishan in Guangdong province (廣東) of China (Leung, 2015). Historically, the survival of the family, as well as the whole Toisan village, required collectivism; everyone was needed. Since there had been no mechanized farming equipment until the twentieth century, planting and harvesting was not accomplishable by any one individual. The division of labor between women and men’s work increased productivity and allowed for village community-sized tasks to be accomplished, such as building levee walls and canals (Lee, 2007). The *hung dee moy* tasks were a part of the division of labor. The sisterhood managed a variety of tasks, including physical and emotional labor in their daily life. Physically, they oversaw farming crops, raising chickens, and maintaining family health (Lee, 2007). Emotionally, elder aunts (*ye-yehs*) and mothers were in charge of rearing children, their own and others, teaching them social rules, and maintaining customs and rituals. Lee explains these sisterhood practices of the Toisan people exemplify an ancient cultural survival system and the practice of *hung dee moy* is part of the Toisanese resilience and infrastructure of the larger collective.

## Hung Dee Moy Embodied Pedagogy

The *hung dee moy* has a complex structure. Beyond collective survival, the sisterhood was organized to accomplish their purpose of members feeling a sense of belonging. The organization of the sisterhood reflected the goals, and each sister had her respective role in this matriarchal system. *Ye-yehs* were the power centers who made decisions and guided younger sisters (*moy-moys*) through example and in a relational context; rarely, if ever, was a practice manual ever provided since the teaching was always meant to be embodied (Lee, 2007, p. 14). Embodied knowledge “...is not simply knowledge of the body, but knowledge dwelling in the body and enacted through the body” (Craig et al., 2017, p. 329). *Hung dee moy* practices were engrained in *moy-moys* through both observation and direct mentorship in tasks or managing relationships. Based on age, status, and skill, *ye-yehs* would teach and pass customs intergenerationally and relationally, tailoring them to the individual sister. Teaching centered on action

in the context of a task or relationship, such as cooking soup for new mothers. As a result, women embodied *hung dee moy* knowledge through this style of instruction. Embodiment of these practices allowed sisters to be flexible and carry *hung dee moy* practices to wherever they moved. Lee also describes how the *hung dee moy* sisterhood maintained the group.

## Hung Dee Moy Ji-Ji-Ja-Ja Communication

A part of group belonging was experienced through being heard in the collective discussions and decision making. Sisters would use *ji-ji-ja-ja*, a conversational method named for the sound the women would make as they conversed, much like the English term “chit chat.” *Ji-ji-ja-ja* was used to build relationships, share information about lives, work out conflict, and discuss family problems (Lee, 2007, p. 313). *Ji-ji-ja-ja* can seem circular, even repetitive, as speakers explore the topic, repeating it over and over. The repetition allows time for all group members to process and understand the topics. They maintained relationships through these processes and upheld traditions through demonstrations of loyalty to the whole group collective: sharing labor, babysitting, discussing news, and sharing meals. In part, they also created belonging through these forms of socialization. Through these regular customs and frequent holiday celebrations, mentoring was a natural and consistent part of their rituals.

## Methods and Data

I share a process description of my use of narrative inquiry as it offers both the researcher and participants a narrative space for telling and retelling experiences they have lived and are living. The narrative space is shaped by the meeting of storied lives (Kim, 2016). In the narrative space, we can examine the interplay between the personal and social stories of teachers, students, communities, institutions, policies, and researchers, creating an intersecting network of life threads interwoven in a particular space and time. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explain, “the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals’ experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (pp. 42–43). Thus, this method allows for tracing generational barriers Asian Americans face within an institutional structure and historical context.

It is also essential to understand how each storied experience exists within narrative inquiry’s three dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Temporality involves the concept of continuity of experience, an understanding that though we live in transition from past to present events, we carry our stories with us through time. Sociality incorporates personal, micro-level “feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” with macro-level “existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise . . . ” (p. 69). The third commonplace grounds my study through the particularity of location. Narrative inquirers can use these three common places to explore identities, and they guide my multidimensional inquiry into these educators’ stories (Clandinin and Connolly). Questioning, wondering, and traversing along these dimensions, narrative inquirers shift forward and back in the dimensions of time, personal situations, and

the larger social influences, seeking to understand participants' lives more fully (Clandinin & Connelly) and make CCW visible.

Felicia and Mary have been research participants in two prior studies (Seiki, 2011; Seiki, 2019). Both participants self-identify as second-generation Toisanese Americans and Asian Americans. Both were born in the baby boomer generation and grew up in the Central Valley of California. They had working-class immigrant parents; their mothers worked at a local cannery together from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. The United States Chinese Exclusion Acts, redlining housing restrictions, and open racial hostility significantly affected their parents and childhood racial experiences. I interviewed Felicia and Mary multiple times over the past 12 years. In 2009 and 2010, I interviewed Felicia and Mary and 18 other San Francisco Bay Area educators about their career and life experiences for my dissertation research. I conducted three follow-up interviews with Felicia and Mary between 2016 and 2022. Felicia and Mary's joint interviews were three sets of approximately 180 minutes. I also conducted shorter hour-long to five-minute clarification interviews individually.

In addition to the interviews, I also include in the study: field texts, artifacts, immigrant annals, and Felicia's writing. In the analysis of the narratives, I used historical public health and residential policy documents from San Francisco Bay Area public records to contextualize and corroborate their experiences. I utilize these documents and historical maps to more fully describe the narratives' temporal, social, and place-based context. Each participant's narrative, and the unpacking through analysis, make visible both the subtle and not-so-subtle ways their sisterhood lived and worked together collectively as a community to survive and thrive within the new environment of the United States. Using my data presentation and analysis rhythm, I present interview excerpts, writing, and field notes, which I then analyze through unpacking within the three-dimensional space. I show Felicia and Mary's experiences of their mother's *hung dee moy*. I reveal how they use their *hung dee moy* CCW to navigate overt racism and anti-Chinese immigrant policies. As we explore their experiences, we find ways to share embodied and sometimes hidden knowledge.

## Findings

In this section, I present Mary and Felicia's writing and narrative reflections. Each long quote or writing is indented and single spaced; they share stories of their mothers *hung dee moy* practices. I compose these findings within the characteristic *hung dee moy* conversational practice of *ji-ji-ja-ja*. As each sister shares their point of view, each listening to the other, offering their analysis and ideas about their stories, they think together in a nonlinear process (Lee, 2007). I present their quotes and writings to show the ways *ji-ji-ja-ja* is used to tease, explore, and analyze their experiences of their mothers' *hung dee moy*. I do not use traditional headers as their conversations flow from one topic into the next. It may be uncomfortable as the writing style will not be in a traditional academic canon, but a hybrid between a *ji-ji-ja-ja* style and research findings.

In the dialogue below, each participant reflects on why their mothers were a part of the sisterhood and what practices they observed and experienced as *hung dee moy*. In the safety of their *ji-ji-ja-ja*

conversation, Felicia and Mary can share their intuitive understandings and process their insights so both can come forth. Felicia and Mary's topics below include this thread order: their mothers' experiences of immigration, the importance of the *hung dee moy* sisterhood and supporting each other, living in the diaspora, cultural loss, and practiced sisterhood values. Below is the first thread—their mothers' experiences of immigration.

Felicia: If you look back at your mother and my mother, you see they never went back to China. They knew they could never go back [they could not afford the boat trip home]. So the only thing they could hold on to was what they had. It was these little traditions and things because that was the only connection they had to their home, which they would never see again. When I think about it, it makes me so sad. (Interview Transcript, April 10, 2017)

Unpacking Felicia's comment reveals the depth of separation from their homeland in immigrating to the United States. Felicia shares the emotional toll of loss as part of the disconnection. A lack of both a phone connection and the ability to travel made her mother's traditions critical. Not only was it a way for her mother to connect to home, but such traditions were also a way to re-create home in a foreign land.

Directly after Felicia's comment, Mary recounts her mother's immigrant experience coming from China to the San Francisco Bay Area. She connects to Felicia's topic of immigration experience and adds her own insights.

Mary: [I always tell of my mom's experience when I give my Angel Island Immigration Tours]. I'm up on the stairs [of the immigration building she was forced to live in]. I always stop at the stairs, and I say this is my wall. This is why I give these tours to honor my mother. Seventeen years old, not speaking a word of English, never ever seeing her mother again, and then [the immigration officer's] segregated her and always separated her from the people she came with, her brother . . . She had to be brave. The sacrifice that my grandfather had to buy 4 round trip tickets [just in case one of his children was deported back to China]. So, I go through each one of those words. I'm choking up [with emotion] and they're [the tourists] choking up. This is [what] the wall . . . tells me. (Interview Transcripts, April 10, 2017)

Unpacking Mary's comments, through temporality, sociality, and place dimensions, I find the macro national context of racism and xenophobia in which her mother immigrated. The pervasive view of Chinese at the time was that they were perpetual foreigners that were racially unassimilable and threatening (Ngai, 2020). This mounting racial hysteria led to the enactment of anti-Chinese federal laws known as the Chinese Exclusion Acts (Chan, 1991). Longstanding racial hostility, the Chinese Exclusion Acts officially spanned from 1882 to 1943 and lasted far longer in practice through state and local policies. Racialized housing covenants within California and San Francisco excluded Chinese from living outside of Chinatown until the late 1950s (Brooks, 2009). Angel Island Immigration Station, which Mary references above, was built as part of the Chinese Exclusion Acts (Chan, 1991) and served as a detention center from 1910 to 1940. It was known for dehumanizing policies, from forced separation, unjust interrogation and deportation, and meager provisions of food and housing. Many Chinese immigrants, including both Mary and Felicia's parents, were held at Angel Island. In the excerpt above by Mary and during my earlier interviews with Felicia and Mary (Seiki, 2011), they spoke of their parents' harrowing experiences at Angel Island. Felicia and Mary's experiences of their mother's immigration as isolating and hostile reveal the backdrop for the need to collectivize and share these important (her)stories.

Below, I include an excerpt of Felicia's memory of her mother. Felicia wrote this memory decades ago and handed me a copy of her typed pages, a personal communication from April 10, 2017. In the story she captures her mother's small-town context, her Central Valley cannery working life and the loss of her husband.

She [Felicia's mother] rested on the concrete stoop that her husband had constructed for her. "Now you won't have to stand while you wait for your ride," he proudly announced. He was always doing thoughtful things for her like planting a Chinese date tree in the backyard so that she wouldn't have to buy them for her soup or taking their seven kids to the motor-movies every Friday night so that she could have some time for herself. The sudden backfire of a distant car returned her to reality, and she was again wrapped in her troubled thoughts. She longingly looked towards the far away horizon as if waiting for a ship to carry her away.

In a few moments her sister-in-law would tear her away from her vision, her ship. Her sister-in-law would take her to another day in the cannery. She would reluctantly board the old, dented, beige Ford that would carry her to another exhausting day of separating, cutting, and peeling tomatoes. The 100°F temperature in the cannery was stifling and unbearable. She was trapped in an oven. No matter how much she gasped for fresh air, there was never enough in the enormous warehouse of perspiring workers. The mixture of sweat, rotting tomatoes on rubber gloves and aprons, and blood from fingers accidentally cut sickened her. There was no escape. Every evening she returned so fatigued that she could not nurture her children.

A thin woman, so small against the constantly changing sky. A strong, determined soul in a diminutive 4'11" frame. Her shoulder-length black hair, streaked with gray and tied in a bun, disguised the fact that she was only 39 years old . . .

Two weeks, just two weeks ago her husband had died. "Why did we come to this country? she lamented to herself. "I can't even speak English!" "How will I take care of the children without him?"

Felicia's memories of her mother's experience reveal the reasons why a *hung dee moy* could be vital; she could withstand the working conditions, the loss of her husband and maintain her large family within her sisterhood community support. She was not alone and had many people to help her remain afloat. Felicia further reflects in the interview and links the ways that the *hung dee moy* was a support system during the context of the story above.

In this recounting, Felicia tells Mary and me about the ways the sisterhood support practices of elder ye-ye caring for the young of another sister occurred in her own life.

Felicia: When my father died . . . your [Mary's] mother and father they were . . . the ones that told us what to do. My family was so poor and we didn't have a lot of supervision because my mom was working in the cannery . . . I don't know half the stuff she [Mary] knows about customs and red envelopes and all that kind of stuff. You know my mother was at the cannery and she didn't have time to transmit that information. But when my father died your [Mary's] parents were the ones that knew all of the [funeral] customs, what's proper to do, way back from the village in China. We didn't know, all of us were under the age of 15, we didn't know what to do. And they [Mary's parents] came in and it was kind of like, you need information about customs and social skills. We went to your [Mary's] mother and father. When someone died we had to put things in envelopes . . . You know because I still don't know why I did all this stuff.

Mary's parents acted as teachers of funeral practices and, in invaluable ways, helped parent Felicia and her siblings. The collectivization of parenting is revealed here. Additionally, the cultural traditions shared provided a sense of belonging to larger traditional practices. In telling this story, Felicia reinforces the need and the practices of the *hung dee moy*. Next, Felicia and Mary explore in *ji-ji-ja-ja* more reasons why they think both their mothers created their sisterhood.

Felicia: . . . The sisterhood was their way of reinventing their family because they lost their family.

Mary: Some who came over were paper sons and daughters. So, they didn't even know who they were . . .

Felicia: And you had to play that game and in order to play that game you had to lose a lot of yourself . . . how do you save it ? how do you keep it in yourself? You have to do it through staying with someone else who has experienced the same thing as you did, because it's all lost.

Felicia: And when you think about it, how brave [both our mothers were to immigrate]. How scary and brave.

Felicia: I realize how important this community in the Central Valley had meant to my mother because she had lost everything else.

Felicia: Everything. She [my mom] lost her language. She couldn't communicate. When I go to Italy I feel so stupid, people look at me as if I'm stupid. I know I'm not stupid but I can't communicate. She couldn't communicate [in United States]. So, you know and of course immigrants are treated . . . [as if] they were nothing. She came from a daughter from whom her mom loved her, because she talked about missing her mom. To all of a sudden becoming nothing . . . [Felicia's mother had] . . . to latch onto people who experience what . . . [she] did. It's a logical thing that they formed this sisterhood.

In the excerpts above, Felicia and Mary explain the purpose of their mothers' sisterhood, which was likely formed to re-create a family support network. Mary and Felicia make empathetic temporal shifts from the past to the present as they think about their mothers' immigration experience and the losses they had to face as Chinese laborers during the exclusion acts. They show in their stories the reasons for their mothers' sisterhood were to maintain a sense of belonging and collective survival. Examining the temporality, sociality, and place dimensions, I can see the need to create this sisterhood is also grounded in the context of the larger socioeconomic macro-level pressures. Felicia and Mary's parents and family immigrated during a time when they faced open hostility toward Chinese laborers through the Exclusion Acts, state, and local policies.

I can also see the access of community cultural wealth to re-create support systems in a new context with new people. The cultural rituals and practices provided a sense of identity as well as gave them humanity, which was in contrast to their immigrant experiences. Additionally, these traditions allowed them to process their grief, loss, and trauma and offered innovative ways to circumvent dehumanization. Chinese and many Toisanese Americans in San Francisco resisted immigration restrictions and innovatively created a covert system of *paper* sons and daughters to get around the Chinese Exclusion Acts (Chan,1991). This strategic system allowed a way to circumvent the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Chinese seeking to gain entrance into the United States could have falsified relative papers, claiming to be a "son"

or “daughter.” Alliances like these allow distant family or friends to enter the country as “sons” and “daughters” of current Chinese residents. Often, paper sons and daughters were kept in secrecy for fear of deportation. Alliances like these were also part of their relational network system and part of their collective survival. Growing up in the midst and aftermath of racialized trauma for generations, Felicia and Mary watched their ethnic enclave communities, families, and mothers resist and survive through forming alliances and collectives, an intergenerational practice, part of their CCW.

In this next subsection, Mary and Felicia explore more of their mothers’ sisterhood through piecing together their experiences as daughters. Pulling memories of their mothers’ *hung dee moy*, they come to note that their mothers’ *hung dee moy* differed from Lee’s (2007) mother’s experiences in China.

Mary: [Our mothers’ Central Valley Cannery] job provided that opportunity for them . . . [when] the cannery was closed. That’s when they would knit and socialize and teach each other [to cook, shop, sew, etc.].

Felicia: Yeah. Yeah.

Mary: During Chinese New Year everybody would bring dim sum and that was Chinese [Toisanese] culture. [The practice was] I would make a box of dim sum for you and then I’d bring it to you and [then] we’d [reciprocate and] bring back some to you. So that’s when all the recipes are being exchanged during the holidays.

Mary: When they would collect unemployment [during off Cannery season] everybody would [ask] how much did you get? Unemployment is determined by how much you earned; during the summers when they packed cherries, some people were faster and that was factored into the unemployment checks. [The sisters asked, ]“ Can Mary come and translate for me?” Our generation [Felicia and Mary’s] was used as translators to help . . . That was another avenue of a sisterhood.

Felicia: It was a total survivor’s support system because they didn’t know how to deal with the language, where to buy the cheapest yarn, no one could read the [knitting] patterns . . .

Mary: [*finishing Felicia’s sentence*] No one drove. We were all in the same neighborhood on the South Side. That’s all they could do, they couldn’t drive, they didn’t know the language.

Felicia: In a way it was isolating. [They] were back in [their] own village. The emotional, cultural supports were all within this group.

In the interview excerpt above, Felicia and Mary shared the structure and processes of their mothers’ sisterhood. Expanding and building on Lee’s characterization of *hung dee moy* as a Toisanese practice of immigrant women in the United States, in the narrative we see their mothers had left their families and country and relocated to a rural Central Valley city in California. In this new country, these women pulled from their cultural wealth and forming and maintaining a village clan or *hung dee moy* sisterhood to survive the macro-level political and socioeconomic hostility, language and work barriers, and pressures of raising a family in a foreign country. In creating a sisterhood, they collectively survived these barriers, working together and navigating the system at the local cannery, teaching each other cooking, gardening, and sharing insights—spanning topics like shopping thriftily to the welfare system—to survive. As Felicia recounts, they also formed an emotional support system in their sisterhood in contrast to the external

hostility; in this sisterhood they re-created their lost home, village, and family. It was also in this place they could belong despite the anti-Chinese hostility.

Felicia and Mary were never overtly taught these skills in isolation; rather, the sisterhood practice is learned in relationship over time, in the living and being together they observed within the community. There was no direct teaching on reciprocity or loyalty; their mothers did not have English words to teach their daughters these concepts. Rather, their mothers pulled them into the sisterhood to learn and embody the practices, the ways a *hung dee moy* traditionally taught in living alongside. When their daughters were old enough—Mary was asked to be a translator—they became participants in the sisterhood. As participants and observers of their mothers' embodied practices, they learned like any cultural practice—*to do as I do*. Felicia and Mary learned their mothers' ways of cultivating and maintaining relationships through learning to sacrifice, give, and receive support alongside their mothers.

The structure of loyalty was a key element of collective survival. As each woman contributed to the whole, they received from the whole. Each woman was not pressured to have to worry about taking care of herself all the time, because the whole of the sisterhood would take care of her and her family. Each individual sister could contribute what they were good at, their part of the dim sum Chinese New Year treats, and, then through reciprocity, pass them along to the others so everyone benefited from the whole. This functioned with food, skills such as knitting techniques, welfare information, translation assistance, transportation access, and more.

Mary added to her observations of the functioning of the sisterhood. Mary explains that all have roles in the sisterhood and each sister contributes teaching and sharing from an area of strength, making the collective stronger as a whole. In an interview in 2018 she said, “in the sisterhood there are experts and novices, [some] people . . . are experts in some areas. Some could drive, speak English, worked at cannery longer . . . then [the] sisterhood brings in younger immigrants.” Mary notes that her mother's *hung dee moy* kept the same training practices as those characterized by Lee (2007). Mary also recounts that she saw differences in *hung dee moy* membership practices. Sisters are added based on the cannery laborer connections to the *hung dee moy*; no longer are family clan ties required for membership. This difference shows an expansion and an innovation in their mother's *hung dee moy* practices. Additionally, the sisterhood is ongoing—new novices like Mary and Felicia or new immigrants are being added into the sisterhood, and, in so doing, they expand their knowledge access and share alongside each other. With each new sister addition came new skills and ability to add to the whole group. Through conversation flowing back and forth, they tossed out ideas and examined them, in a characteristic *ji-ji-ja-ja* sisterhood style (Lee, 2007, p. 17).

According to Lee (2007), Mary and Felicia were born into this relational network, yet Mary and Felicia were not always consciously aware of their positionality within their mothers' *hung dee moy*. In fact, they disagreed if they were *hung dee moy*, as shared in the opening of the paper, and here again. “No, I don't think we're *hung dee moy*.” Then, Felicia leaned forward across the table, looking Mary directly in the eyes, “No Mary, we are *hung dee moy*.”

Unpacking this tension, it could be that Mary and Felicia were unknowingly a part of their mothers' *hung dee moy*. Second-generation immigrants, like Felicia and Mary, often experience cultural loss and cultural incongruity, not being able to relate and understand their parents' customs (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Moreover, embodied community cultural wealth can be an unconscious knowing that needs to be narratively told, retold, and explored. To further understand their place in their mothers' *hung dee moy*, Felicia and Mary use *ji-ji-ja-ja* to further tease and explore if their mothers actually were including them as part of their *hung dee moy*.

Felicia: I think it was because of our connection with our mothers, we helped each other out and you helped me.

Felicia: I think it's interesting for Mary and me—because of our relationship from [living in the same Central Valley City], she's like my sister. Even though we're not really related she's more like my sister than my sister is sometimes. It's kind of interesting in how and how it all comes from being from that same area, I think. I always remember Mary was in the same high school as me and was one year older so we ... associated . . . [in] a Leadership Conference and I remember because of you [Mary] I got in.

Felicia: And because of Mary and our connection, she got me a job at [a Middle School]. She didn't even know me; she only knew that our parents knew each other. Now I'm sick of you [joking].

Mary: We were on the South Side. She [Felicia] was in the Central [part of the Central Valley City].

Felicia: Which is the poorer of the poor.

As Felicia explained, they began to help one another out of loyalty to their mothers. As daughters, Felicia and Mary knew that the way they treated each other would directly reflect on their mothers. In order to both honor their mothers and each other, they chose to be loyal. Loyalty is a key concept of *hung dee moy*, as loyalty bonds are as strong as blood relatives within the sisterhood and loyalty is expressed in willingness to help one another (Lee, 2007). In this incident, Felicia acknowledged how Mary had helped her out twice, many decades ago in the early part of their relationship, when they were *moy moys* in the *hung dee moy*. Mary's loyalty and generosity to Felicia were *hung dee moy* practices and had built trust, such as when she helped Felicia get into a high school leadership program and again at the start of her teaching career in the San Francisco Bay area. Mary embodied these *hung dee moy* practices, which facilitated her ability to use them in the different school contexts Felicia describes.

As Mary and Felicia recounted these stories and engaged in analysis, they saw their part in this inter-generational practice. Through focusing on their mothers' sisterhood, they could see the ways their mothers were influential in forming the bonds between them. Both Mary and Felicia have come to know and finally agree they are *hung dee moy*; they are a part of a larger legacy of sisters.

## Significance

Mary and Felicia offer new insights through unpacking their experiences of their mothers' sisterhood, expanding on Lee's characterization. Their mothers gifted to their daughters, Mary and Felicia, embodied relational knowledge, practices, and pedagogy to thrive and survive despite interpersonal and institutional oppression. The embodied practices of the *hung dee moy* live within them. They also articulate the values of generosity, humility, all a part of a greater purpose of belonging and survival and show how each sisterhood is nuanced and evolves according to the sister's context. In so doing they provide proactive representations revealing a wealth of resistance and navigations capital, part of their CCW.

Mary and Felicia revealed from their experiences that their mothers had a workplace based *hung dee moy* and new sisterhood membership styles. Through the narratives of Felicia and Mary's mothers' sisterhood practices, we find Toisan diaspora *hung dee moy* to be unique to their context. In sharing and analyzing these narratives of collective resistance, we seek to promote a collective consciousness within our communities and schools. This first generation of immigrant Toisan women, as well as their daughters' generation, used cultural wealth, imagination, and action to survive and thrive in exclusionary racial and linguistic hierarchies. In turn, this sisterhood revealed that relationships strengthened their resistance in each generation. Each generation created and maintained relationships over generations that functioned as a sacred place of belonging, which consequently helped them to change their daughters' lives. From their relational and collective space of belonging as a nontraditional family of sisters, a form of resistance is created to survive and thrive despite the dominant narrative about Toisanese Americans and women. Each sisterhood's work is steeped in generational knowledge and cultural wealth, and their shifts impact subsequent generations, including my own.

As I reread through these transcripts and unpacked this research, I came to see the ways both Mary and Felicia were including me in the *hung dee moy* practices. My hope is that readers and Toisanese women will pick up this work and sit with their grandmothers, mothers, and aunts to further unpack this rich treasure. The *hung dee moy* continues to provide a sense of belonging and survival with each generation that gathers new sisters to employ its practices.

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