



METHODS:

Participant Observation

- Visits to the Hmong Community Farm and the Glenham Street garden
- Visits to several private residences, sharing meals and observing backyard gardens, especially medicinal plants grown for home use.
- Workdays at Pak Express Farm on Friday afternoons with Chang and George Xiong

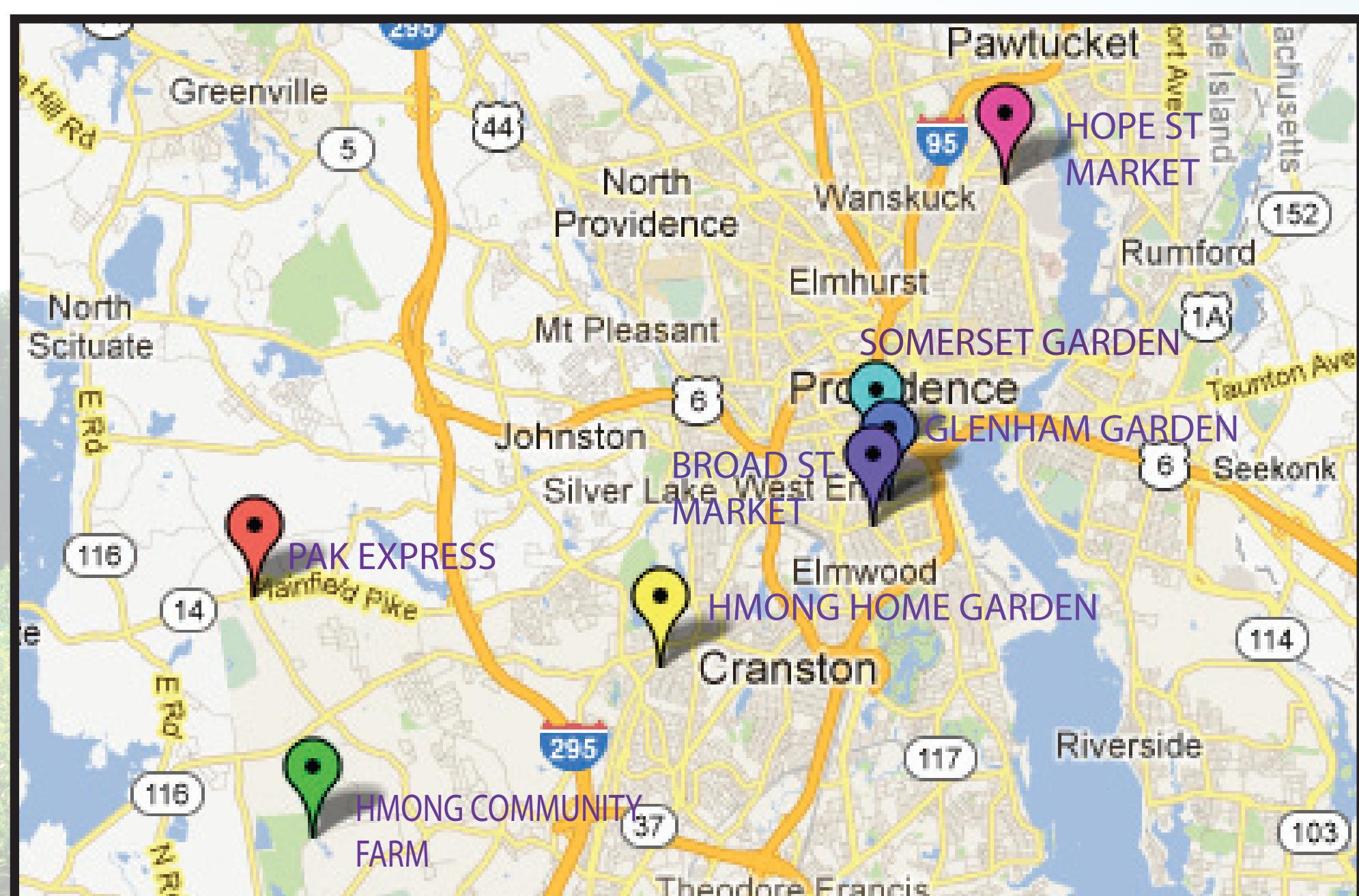
"It is the responsibility of the older generation to teach the young ones how to farm, so I will teach you anything you want to know." -Chang Xiong

Oral History Interviews

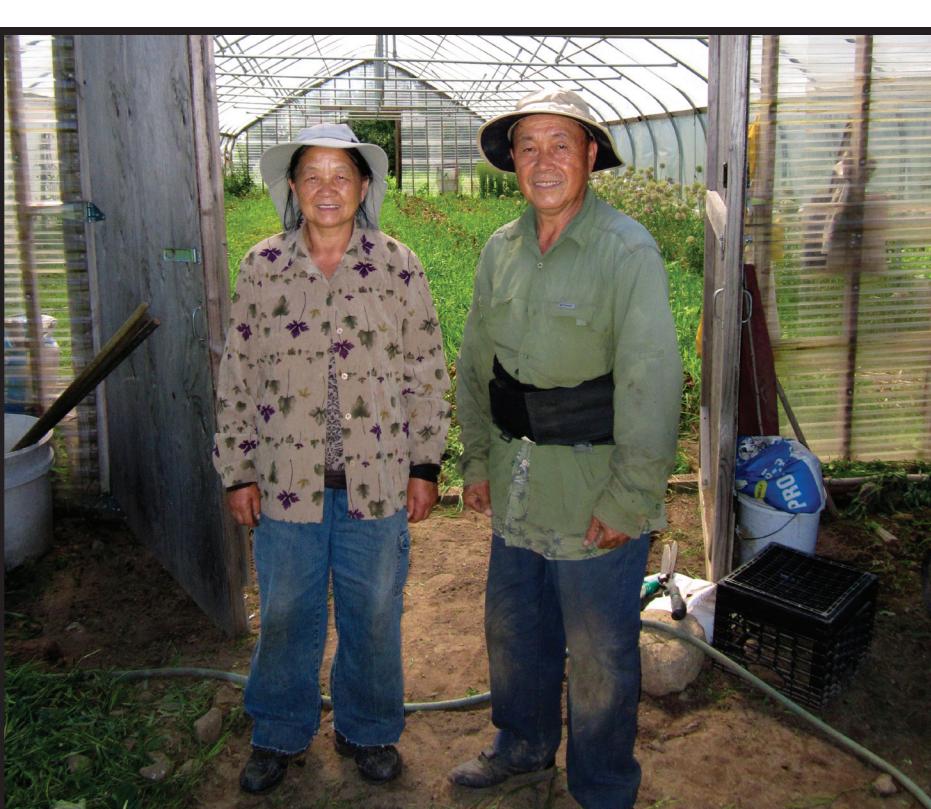
- In-depth qualitative interviews with farmers and members of the Hmong community who have been involved in farm activities
- I ask a handful of open-ended questions focused on farming experiences, adaptation of knowledge, challenges presented by this new context, and perceptions of food and farming in the US

Interviews and Participant Observation will continue throughout the fall.

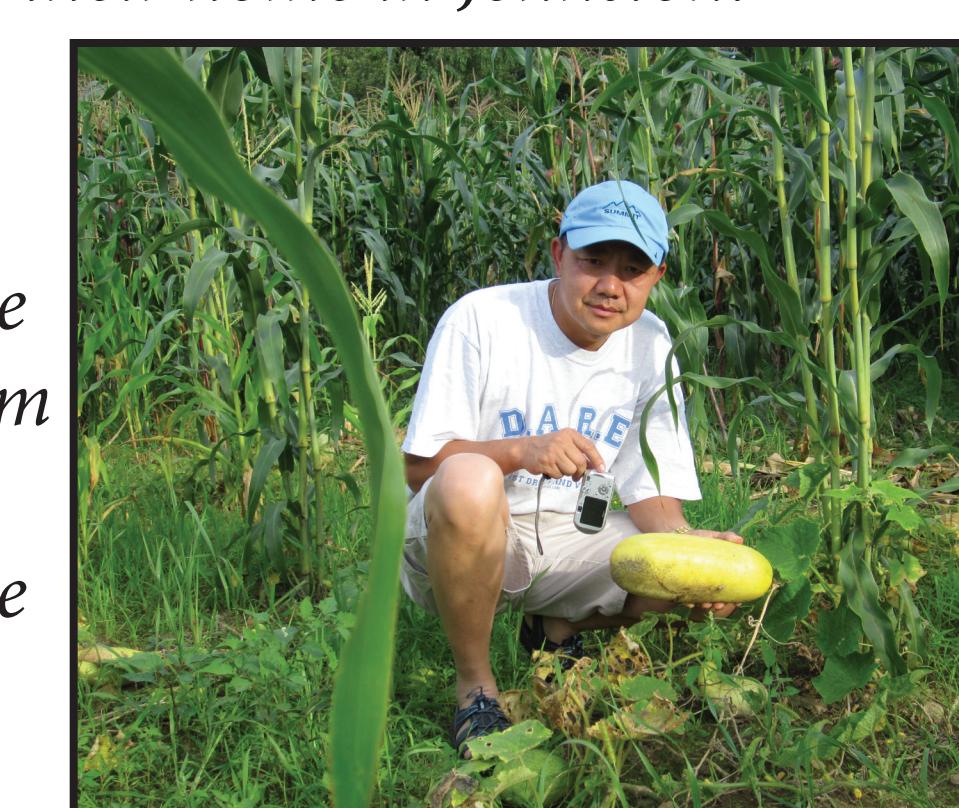
My Research Sites



MEET THE FARMERS (just a few of the many!)



Chang and George Xiong, Pak Express Farm
After years of working in jewelry manufacturing and selling handmade items, Chang has returned to her source of happiness, farming, and has made a successful business with the help of her husband, George, who has retired from the Providence Police. Chang and George cultivate 2 acres at Urban Edge Farm and 1 acre at their home in Johnston.



Phillip Yang, Hmong Association of RI, President
Phillip is an architect who assists his wife in cultivating two large plots at the Hmong Community Farm, and a plot at the Glenham St. community garden. As President of HUARI, Phillip aims to improve farming opportunities for the Hmong community, locate more farmland, and create programs to educate Hmong youth about farming.



Kia Yang, SCLT Community Grower
Kia can be found selling her produce with other community growers at the Broad Street farmers market every Saturday. She tends plots at the Hmong Community Farm and Glenham St garden. After first arriving in Iowa where she found no land to farm, Kia was glad to migrate to Providence where garden space was available. She is a great teacher, sharing her knowledge of farming with younger community members...and me! when the soybeans are ready, she's teaching me to make tofu!

Stories of Agriculture, Adaptation, and Perceptions of Farming as a Livelihood from the Hmong Community in Providence, RI

Preliminary research for Master's thesis project

Hannah Ross

Advisor: Dr. Kathryn DeMaster



A Bitter Melon Blossom at Glenham Street Garden, Southside Providence

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What specific growing techniques characterize Hmong farming, and how have growers adapted their generations-old knowledge in order to transplant the techniques and crops of their agrarian heritage to the Providence setting? What does this adaptation mean for Hmong growers in the context of resettlement?

How do the Hmong in Providence perceive farming as a livelihood in the United States, and how have Hmong views of work in general shifted in the context of a non-agrarian society?

How do the Hmong in Providence view the United States' food and farming system, and how are Hmong traditions related to food and nutrition reshaped or mobilized in response to this different context?

How might the Hmong community in Providence be better supported in the persistence of their farming tradition, and what does this mean for the larger urban farming community in Providence?



A LOOK AT MY FINDINGS

Knowledge sharing is an important adaptive tool

Intercropping and crop diversity key features of Hmong farming

Perceptions of farming as a livelihood in the US differ between and among generations

Maintaining soil fertility of one plot year after year creates a challenge for the traditionally migratory farming culture

Medicinal herbs are widely cultivated by the Hmong; Women in the community are great sources of knowledge about plant medicine and healing

Discontent is expressed with "unnatural" methods of meat production in the US, along with the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides

Traditional Hmong diets are being continued or renewed as a way to counter the observed negative health effects and other concerns related to an American diet

Perceptions of a farming as a livelihood vary in the community, from "didn't you do enough farming back in Laos?" to "farming is my happiness"

Market growers run their businesses in a variety of ways: some sell collectively, some are urban-based, and some have undergone new farmer training at Urban Edge Farm

Support for Hmong farming community in terms of land, funding, and training needs to be explored

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Phillip Yang, President of the Hmong United Association of RI

Chang and George Xiong

Kia Yang

Brown University CES

Southside Community Land Trust



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