

# Discuss the roles of power and social stratification

[Science](#), [Anthropology](#)



The roles of power and social stratification In *The Spirit Catches you and You Fall Down*, the themes are driven mostly by tugs of war for power. These are supported by several instances as is evident between the doctors and Lee's parents, and the Americans versus the Hmong peoples. These struggles, seemingly emerge from the issue of social stratification between the two ethnicities which plunges them into the constant battles. These two elements from the book are highlighted here in.

The first event where a power struggle emerges is after Lia's family immigrated to the United States and they found the western cultures to be quite dissimilar from their native origin. These western influences impacted on Lia's family in several ways; first of all, they became entangled in constant tugs of war with the American doctors who brushed off Hmong strong cultural beliefs as unreasonable and stupid. On the contrary, Lia's family believed in the Hmong beliefs, and in it, was confused by the medicine administered by the doctors together with the Hmong rituals they were still holding onto. The other effect that Lia's family encountered while on foreign soil was that by accepting the [new] western cultures. To them, the western cultures were overly rude and disrespectful as was seen in the medical settings. In the Hmong beliefs, a doctor could not undress a patient or use powerful drugs on them. These were, however allowed in America. Again, they did not understand the medical explanation for epilepsy as an effect to the brain; rather, they perceived of it as "exit" of one's soul, which to them was caused by Lia's sister banging the door to her little sister. These are some of the cultural challenges they encountered in America.

On the other hand, the statuses of the Hmong were also affected by their

arrival to America. At the outset, they comprehended that they had plunged themselves into an excessively stratifying culture, and in the segregation that followed, they felt less welcome and enslaved in the west. This is because the westerners perceived on the Hmong as inferior and “contaminators” of their culture. As such, they looked upon them as mere aliens invading their land and went on to be rather harsh on them. The effect of this was the Hmong is acquiring lower levels of esteem while on foreign soil. On the other hand, they also deteriorated materially in that they did not find any worthy jobs to act as sources of life for them and had to compete with unemployed Americans in seeking for demeaning jobs. Their unemployment statuses were influenced by the beliefs of their hosts that they were less able, and could not match the American intellect. As a result, they only had the meanest jobs allocated to them. In short, life for them in America was worse than it was in Asia.

All these atrocities and disagreements between the two cultures can be attributed to prejudice and radical ethnicity. First on the Hmong side, they were not ready to absorb new cultures even though they had moved to new localities. This was obvious in placing them at loggerheads with the wider American Society. This was evident in their resistance of Western medical ideologies. On the contrary (American) side, seemingly the biggest perpetrators of the hostility, they perceived of the Hmong as aliens who were in their country to hamper with their ordinary way of life. To add to this, they felt that the beliefs that the Hmong brought along with them were stupid and were not applicable. As such, both sides were responsible for the tugs of supremacy which emerged between them. Concisely, the westerners were

seeking to enforce their cultures on the foreigners who on their part were unwilling to give up their cultures for the western ones (Fadiman, 1997).

#### References

Fadiman, A. (1997). *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. Best Notes.