HMONG MINORITY IN EUREKA:
A STUDY OF ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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Abstract

Data from forty Hmong refugees living in Eureka, California area suggest that the 1980 refugee resettlement program assigned to them by the Office of Refugee Resettlement was ineffective. The Refugee Act of 1980 formalised and supplemented the Southeast Asian refugee resettlement system that existed at that time. It was based primarily on the cultural and situational concerns of the South Vietnamese refugees who emerged at the end of the American involvement in Vietnam in 1975. Information gleaned from this research indicates that the older Hmong adults became particularly disoriented when they tried to adjust to life in America. This study will show that the failure of the older Hmong population to adapt to the host culture’s lifestyle is the result of inadequate assimilation approach.
"Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer" (Psalm 4:1).

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Introduction

To date only a limited amount of research has been devoted to Hmong refugees in the United States. In writing this thesis I hope to contribute some understanding and knowledge about the refugees. In addition to their stressful transition from an agrarian lifestyle to the highly advanced U.S. technological society they are experiencing a serious breakdown of traditional beliefs and values. In particular, this is evident in the weakening of family ties and the disappearance of traditional communal life.

In America H Mong refugees are faced with new challenges and experiences that disrupt rather than supports collective behavior. This leads inexorably to the deconstruction of family life and has a very negative impact on the lives of the H Mong refugees. To uncover the problems stemming from this impact, it is necessary to be aware of H Mong life prior to their flight to the United States. Therefore, I will examine H Mong lifestyle in their native Laos to identify their socio-cultural indoctrination prior to their migration to America.

Furthermore, since the adult H Mong refugees who came to America in the 1980's experience the greatest impact from migration, I will concentrate on them in this thesis.

The H Mong situation is compounded by their misidentification as part of the Vietnamese refugee population. This failure to differentiate between the H Mong and Vietnamese population has resulted in the application of the Vietnamese resettlement program to the H Mong, thus, treating both populations as a single category for analysis (Kibria 1993:10). Yet the cultural, social and historical differences between these two groups is great. For example, Quincy (1995) notes that the H Mong minority in Laos has their implacable independence
nature with a strong ethnic identity. "This experience differs from that of the Vietnamese whose sense of cultural distinctiveness develops in the United States because they were the majority group in their homeland" (Hein 1990:3). Additionally, formal education that is widespread in the Vietnamese population is non-existent for the Hmong refugees and exposure to Western culture prior to arrival in the United States varied considerably between the two groups. Finally, there is a vest difference between Vietnamese culture that is shaped by Confucianist ideology and Hmong culture based on animistic religious beliefs. While it is true that both Confucianism and animism promote a patrilineal family hierarchy and a dedication to family, Confucianism also promotes education and thrift that are not generally associated with animism and, specifically, not part of Hmong cultural heritage (Hume 1985).

According to Kibria:

Vietnamese society has been deeply shaped by the Chinese, who invaded Vietnam in 111 BC. and ruled the country for a thousand years.... The people adopted the Chinese concept that the emperor is the son of heaven, intermediary between the people and heaven, and the supreme judge and grand pontiff. Chinese books, literature and writing were introduced to the Vietnamese, and the Sinophiles formed a class of literati. No less important were the teaching of Chinese culture and traditions, and of social and religious ceremonies and technical education in land cultivation. (1993:38,39)

The Vietnamese family system was impacted by a variety of cultural traditions including, primarily, Confucianism "which molded the core of family life, and provided a set of ideal standards and structure for kin relations" (Kibria 1993:43). Confucianism, however, was not the only influence in Vietnam kin relations. There is, according to Hy Van Luong, "an alternative, coexisting and intertwined model of kinship relations in the sociocultural system" (1984:300). This
alternative model defines the Vietnamese kinship system "in broad terms to include bilateral and distant kin and is in general less rigid and male dominated the Confucianism model." These variations in the Vietnamese traditional family system were important to its ability to adapt to changing circumstances such as those they found as refugees in the United States.

The Hmong were isolated from mainstream society and living in the remote mountains of Laos when France was introducing the Vietnamese to the Western world in the late nineteenth century. Kibria states that:

By 1883, France had gained control over Vietnam after two centuries of trading and Catholic missionary activity in the area. (Kibria 1993:40)

Under French rule the traditional political and legal organization of village life was gradually replaced as "the traditional autonomy of the village from the state was considerably reduced, particularly in the South" (Kibria 1993:42). When French rule ended in 1954, South Vietnamese traditional village life had been completely eradicated.

After 1954, the United States became involved in Vietnamese domestic affairs during the Vietnam War that lasted until 1975. As a result of the French and American influences, the Vietnamese developed a pre-existing capacity to adapt to Western culture. For example, Montero's study shows that they had widespread exposure to formal education:

Almost 50 percent of the Vietnamese refugees had some formal schooling before they came to the United States. (1979:84)

Montero further states that:

Many of the Vietnamese refugees were familiar with American culture and language prior to their departure. Even before the Americans arrived in Vietnam, many Vietnamese because of the French presence knew Western culture. (1979:85)
The level of formal education among the Vietnamese refugees was relatively higher than the Hmong people. The Hmong, according to Health, "had little or no experience with written forms of their language even though some had learned basic reading and writing skills in refugee camps in Thailand" (1996:165). A teenage interviewee shared that "we learned English in Thai refugee camps for only maximal of six months before we come to United States."

Hmong refugees' minimal exposure to Western culture strengthened their resolve to safeguard their own way of life. Consequently, the areas of primary concern for Hmong refugees in the United States revolved around their religious beliefs, cultural and family values.

The Significance of the Study

The Initial years of resettlement for refugees holds special insights for those interested in the refugee experience. It is when refugees first arrive in their new country that the social and cultural challenges posed by migration may be experienced in a particularly disorienting fashion. The strangeness of the new society and the pressure of beginning a new life may come as a shock and disappointment to migrants as they come to the sudden realization of their new situation in a foreign land. This sense of disjuncture may be especially severe for migrants whose cultural background has no referent in their new surroundings.
Such is the case for the H'Mong refugees in the United States who migrated from Laos at the end of the American involvement, in 1975, in the Vietnamese war. In Laos the H'Mong lived in a preliterate agrarian community in the Laotian mountains.

The purpose of this study is to identify the resettlement impact on the lives of the initial Laotian born H'Mong migrants to the United States and how their social world has changed as a consequence. The value of the study is that it assesses the poignant challenges to the migrant's worldview and sense of self at an especially vulnerable time in their lives. Policymakers, in particular, may benefit from these unique experiences by developing resettlement programs that target immigrant and refugee groups on the basis of their cultural background rather than on their ascribed ethnic identity.
CHAPTER 1
A Brief History of the Hmong People

The Hmong in China

The original territory of the Hmong kingdom (AD. 400-900) was in China, from south of the Yellow River to the northern part of Guangxi province, which included southern Honan, central Hubei, eastern Hunan, and northern Guangxi province (Quincy 1995: 44). Throughout history, the Hmong were well known as great warriors or war experts of highland fighters and were a threat to the Chinese central government.

Shortly after the Hmong kingdom was established, Mongolian leaders ruled over all of China for a few centuries; however, China was in chaos under the rule of the Mongolian leaders. That was the reason the Yuan dynasty was not recognized until the end of the eleventh century. Officially, the Yuan dynasty lasted less than two decades. Meanwhile, the Hmong people were also interacting with the central government. The Yuan dynasty was followed by a strong dynasty called Ming (A. D. 1368-1644). During the Ming dynasty Hmong villagers and militia were tortured and defeated which caused the Hmong’s initial migration toward southwest provinces. The Ming dynasty was followed by the Qing dynasty (A. D. 1645-1911). The Qing dynasty was also known as the Manchu dynasty, which means that the members of the native Manchurian race ruled over China.

During the Qing dynasty, the Emperor Yong-Zheng sent Major General A-Err-Tai to settle the chaos among the minority tribes on the border. He introduced a policy called Border Ethnic Autonomy that allowed the tribe to administer to its own people; therefore, a Hmong leader could rule over the Hmong people. During this time, the Hmong had a peaceful life. Following the rule of Emperor
Yong-Zheng, there was a return to harsh policy under Emperor Chung-Loong. The H'Mong were persecuted severely in the first year of his rule. There were approximately twelve hundred villages destroyed and H'Mong villagers killed (Ming & Qing History 1995: 320). Consequently, the unequal treatment forced many H'Mong to migrate southwestward, from the inland provinces to the provinces on the border of China, such as Guizhou, Yunnan, and Guangxi provinces.

Subsequently, the majority of the H'Mong migrated to mainland Southeast Asian countries in the middle of the eighteenth century. Those who migrated to mainland Southeast Asia were the H'Mong who had not assimilated into the Chinese culture and clung to their traditional culture. Today there are over five million H'Mong living in China (Thao 1997:2) which is the largest H'Mong population in the world.

The H'Mong in Mainland Southeast Asia

The H'Mong in mainland Southeast Asia are living in a pre-literate society whose culture has not been committed to writing. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the priest F. M. Savina, sent by the Society of Foreign Missions in Paris was the first person to write about the H'Mong society in detail (Quincy 1995:17). He was followed in 1940 by two Catholic missionaries who undertook the task of committing the H'Mong language to the written word. They promoted the language for the purpose of translating the Christian Bible into the H'Mong language.

One of the unique characteristics of the H'Mong people was their wish for privacy and autonomy (Bliatout 1988:3). They settled down in the forests of the highlands to continue their self-sufficient lifestyle. The H'Mong were peace-loving
and had a good relationship with the local Royal Laotian government. The HMong population grew rapidly and in 1974 was given citizenship status by the Laotian government (Bliatout 1988:4).

Prior to the Vietnam War in 1960, the United States government was involved with the Royal Laotian Government through the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. At that time, there were over 300,000 highland warriors from various tribes, such as HMong, Khmu, Mien, Tin, and Lahu. These warriors were recruited in 1960 for the United States military as part of a special force in a war against the Viet Cong in Laos (1961-1973). In this situation, the HMong fought alongside the Royal Laotian Government against the Viet Cong-trained Pathet Lao. Finally, the war came to an end as a result of a political agreement in 1973, and in April of 1974, both the Royal Laos and the Communist Pathet Laos constituted a "Government of National Union." However, the Pathet Laos broke this agreement and took control of the whole country in May of 1975 (Bliatout 1988:5).

Under the Pathet Lao regime, all those who supported the Royal Laotian Government and the United States in the war in Laos were considered "the enemies of the state" (Chan 1994:28).

Around one third of the 300,000 HMong fighters had sacrificed their lives in the war (Gibson 1990:3). Approximately 100,000 of the remaining HMong fighters and their families escaped to Thailand and about 150,000 migrated to the United States where they were granted political asylum. The rest of them remain in the Thailand refugee camps.

The HMong people who migrated to the United States did so in the belief that they had a special agreement with the United States government, as Yang and Xiong aver:
In the past, the American government promised us that if we helped them to fight the communist Vietnamese and Laos, Americans would come to develop Laos. Yet if we lose the war, we can come and stay in the United States, the land of freedom. (1997:2)

The Hmong in the United States

"The Hmong are believed to have come originally from Mongolia, moving and settling in various provinces in southern China" (Smith 1992:34). From there they moved to the remote mountains of mainland Southeast Asia, such as Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. Subsequently, many resettled in the United States.

Gibson quotes from Ranard’s description of the Hmong arrival in the U.S. as:

Like Alice falling down a rabbit hole, the Hmong have suddenly found themselves in a strange wonderland where nothing is the same. Their pre-literate society has been dropped into the age of technology. (Gibson 1990:2)

The Hmong had moved from mountain villages where they lived in simple village houses without electricity and running water to an ultra modern post-industrial society. The revolutionary nature of this social change made it extremely difficult for them to function in American society.

Since the first wave of Hmong people to the United States in 1975, there has been a steady increase in the Hmong population. Statistics shows that nearly 90,000 Hmong were granted political asylum after the events in Laos (Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton 1990: xi). Today in the United States the Hmong population has grown almost to 1.1 million (Thao 1997:3).
The HMong in Eureka, California

According to Smith, many HMong came to the city of Eureka, California through Church World Service:

...there is no secular agency involved in getting refugees to Humboldt County. Rather, Church World Services, a refugee "umbrella" program, involves its network in major cities which contacts churches throughout the states to see if the congregations are willing to sponsor refugees and help them resettle. For example, [the person who is in charge] would contact the First Methodist Church in Eureka to see if help is available here. Other religious based Joint Voluntary Agencies operate the same way. (Smith 1992:41)

Additionally, they have migrated to Eureka from Minnesota due to the similarity of the climate in both Eureka and Laos. Since 1981, approximately "1,000 HMong have come to reside in Humboldt County" (Smith 1992:41).

The HMong maintain strong independent characteristics and, true to their history, they have rarely been involved in local government and local administration affairs. Thus, they "have the fame of being fierce fighters and mountain people with strong patrilineal clan...." (Trueba et al. 1990: xii). Consequently, their history and culture distinguishes them as a unique ethnic group in the city of Eureka.

Even though the HMong are living in a post-modern society today, they try to maintain the traditional way of life. The unique background of the HMong is that they lived in an illiterate society where there was no formal education, no technology, and almost no exposure to cultural diversity. Because of the Vietnam War they migrated to a country where there is formal education, widespread modern technology, and almost everyday exposure to cultural diversity (Levine & Levine: 1983).
ENDNOTES

1 According to the history, the majority of the Hmong people migrated to mainland Southeast Asia in the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the first Hmong groups entered northeastern Laos between 1810 to 1820. Many people use the term "Southeast Asia countries," instead of "Mainland Southeast Asian countries" which is inaccurate. According to Judy Lewis (1991:5), mainland Southeast Asia constitutes Vietnam, Kampuchea (Cambodia), Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. "Insular Southeast Asia" includes Indonesia, and Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and Timor.
Defining the Name

The academic research regarding the HMong people is still in the beginning stage. For example, there are a few studies published in French as early as 1930. The study about the HMong people was not introduced to the American public until 1969 (Garrett: 1969, 1974; Yang: 1974). A few studies appear around the 1980s (Bliatout:1982, 1988; Hendricks:1986). Subsequently, the scarcity of information has led some Western scholars to mistaken interpretations of historical facts regarding the HMong people. This is seen in misunderstandings about the names of different factions of the HMong.

The HMong are a people in mainland Southeast Asia. Their culture and language essentially stem from "the Miao people" in China. It is believed that the Miao in China are the ancestors of the HMong people (Norma Diamond:92). Although many scholars agree that the HMong came from China, there are some who believe that they originated in Mongolia, and yet others who believe that the HMong ancestors lived in China earlier than the Chinese (Thao 1997:3).

Among the HMong people in the United States, "Miao" is a controversial term. There are different attributes to the term "Miao" which are inaccurate. This has caused controversy among the HMong. For example, a HMong scholar, Yang Dao writes:

The word 'Miao,' meaning barbarian, was used originally during the expansionist conquests of the Han dynasty to refer to all peoples of other than Chinese origin. Later, the epithet 'Miao' was confined to certain refractory ethnic groups, including the Hmong, who fought against Chinese domination. (1993: xvi)

This explanation identifies the word "Miao" as both "barbarian" and "all peoples of other than Chinese origin in China." The truth is that these two meanings actually derive from
It appears that Yang Dao is interpreting the term "Miao mun" which means "barbarian Miao." Therefore, "mun" is the term for "barbarian."

The word "mun" was used as an adjective in ancient Chinese history for "all non-Han peoples who live in the southern part of the Yellow River region." However, after the Han dominion was expanded at the end of the Han Dynasty about two thousand years ago, the Han culture spread southward. Consequently, the meaning of the word 'mun' has changed. The Hmong population and other populations of the Southern part of the Yellow River region were forced to assimilate into the Han culture. As a result, the word "mun" was no longer used to describe ethnic Chinese minorities.

Norma Diamond defines the term "Miao" in the same way as the Chinese dictionary (1993). The following two definitions then are compared:

Literally "miao" means "sprout" or sometimes "seedlings." (Diamond:92)

"Miao" means "sprout." In formal usage "miao" is equivalent to "shoot" which means "new twigs from a stem" and in the metaphorical content means "offspring." (Chinese Dictionary 1993:821)

On the one hand, perhaps the Hmong are named "the Miao" because they are mostly a farming people. Therefore, the term "Miao" describes the Hmong people's way of life. On the other hand, the word 'Miao' is highly respected as one of the Chinese family names (Chinese dictionary 1993:821). Additionally, the word "miao" in the Chinese version of the Christian Bible means "offspring." It was written: "Christ is the 'shoot' of David." The word 'shoot' was translated in the Chinese Bible as the word 'miao.' The whole sentence is translated as "Christ is the 'offspring' of the King David." Therefore, it is wise to attach the meanings "offspring," "shoot," or "sprout" to the term "Miao."
Sometimes the term "Miao," which is loosely interpreted by the Chinese as "the
cry of the cat," is mistaken for the term "Miao" that is used to describe the Hmong
people. As a matter of fact, these two words are linguistically unrelated. The words
"Miao" and "cry of the cat" are different in appearance (see exhibit in appendix 6) and
tones.

However, the Hmong people themselves prefer to be called either the "Mong" or
the "Hmong" depending on what kind of Hmong they are. For the purpose of my study, I
will use the term "Hmong" to refer to both the Mong and the Hmong people.

According to Yang Dao, Hmong means "Free People" (Lee 1997: 2). Unlike
Yang's translation, R. Jenks argues that the Hmong as "free people" implies a somewhat
war-like negative stereotyping. Jenks advises that "almost everyone seems to agree that
the Miao were independent and warlike. Boys were raised to be brave warriors above all
else" (Lee 1997:4).

The fact is that the Hmong people value their independence and insist on
maintaining their own culture. Traditionally, the boys were raised as "brave warriors" to
ensure the protection of their villages, their people, and their families. As of today, in the
Hmong culture, the male continues to represent the strength of the family and is expected
to protect the family members from the outside enemies.

According to Chinese dictionaries, there was a minority group in the past called
"San Miao" which means "three Miao." Additionally, they were classified by the Chinese
central government into "raw Miao" and "cooked Miao" according to the level of their
assimilation into the mainstream Chinese culture (Chinese Dictionary 1984:821). The
faction called "cooked Miao" more or less has assimilated into mainstream Chinese but
the "raw Miao" refused to assimilate, and they were forced to move to mainland
Southeast Asia. These "raw Miao" made up the Hmong population who are the subject
of this study. From the outset then, the Hmong have demonstrated their implacable independent nature.

In order to maintain their traditional culture and independence, the Hmong migrated from one place to another. As a result, during the period between the Han dynasty in the first century and the Qing dynasty in the sixteenth century, the Hmong population gradually spread southward. The major part of the migration took place during the Qing dynasty, under the Manchu government when the Hmong were especially singled out and subjected to political and cultural persecution. Eventually the Hmong moved to mainland Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar (Ming & Qing History 1993:303).

Today the assimilated Miao population in China is treated unequally. The Hmong as a particular ethnic group is unable to make their voice heard. For example, Norma Diamond addresses the land distribution policy for ethnic minorities by the Chinese government:

The term Miao does not even appear in the name of the territorial unit. In a few the Miao are named in conjunction with one or two others, as in Qiandongnan Miaozu-Dongzu Autonomous Prefecture in eastern Guizhou or Weining Yizu-Huizu-Miaozu Autonomous County in western Guizhou. (Diamond:93)

The name Miao only appears partially with other ethnic groups. This is seen as 'another new strategy' to deal with ethnic minorities. Officially, large ethnic groups are supposed to have their own land under Chinese land distribution policy. However, this policy has never been implemented. The reality is that several ethnic groups are assigned to only one area of land.

Overall, the misinformation about the Hmong from the definition of the term "Miao" is due to the lack of accurate historical records and the political isolation of the
HMong people. The history of the HMong people has been recorded by other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, little has been written by the HMong people, and their history remains mostly an oral history.

Comparing HMong to Other Immigrants

The HMong were classified as Indochinese Refugees after their arrival in the United States. However, it is crucial to understand that the HMong are different from other ethnic groups from Southeast Asia, such as Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laos, and Thai because they came from a different cultural background. For instance, while the HMong people came from a pre-literate society, Takaki states that:

Altogether some 130,000 Vietnamese refugees found sanctuary in the United States in 1975. The first-wave refugees generally came from the educated classes: 37 percent of the heads of households had completed high school and 16 percent had been to college. Almost two thirds could speak English well or with some fluency.... They had worked with the French and then American. (Takaki 1989:451, 449)

Unlike the HMong people, Vietnamese refugees came to the U.S. in large numbers from different social backgrounds than the HMong people, with stronger economic foundations and working skills, and many highly educated refugees came from large cities like Saigon. These differences in Vietnamese refugees were considered as their "pre-existing capacity" to adapt to the American culture.

Regardless of the background of the Vietnamese immigrants in the U.S., Takaki also discovered that some Vietnamese were not willing to return to Vietnam. Takaki quotes from a Vietnamese who came to the U.S. when she was seven-year-old:

Returning to Vietnam is not a choice, ... Now I'm American culturally. But the Vietnamese community in California has grown so large that you almost don't have to go home to be home. Here you can find Vietnamese food, dances, and culture. (Takaki 1989:456)
There are many large Vietnamese communities in the United States, especially in California. For example, there is a place like "Little Saigon" in Southern California, where many Vietnamese have "relied heavily on ethnic solidarity. Subsequently, they made substantial social and economic achievement" (Montero 1979:60).

However, in the United States, the HMong do not have an ethnic enclave to regroup their own people "in recognition of their need for physical and emotional support" as the Vietnamese have (Montero 1979:60). Many HMong complain that they feel like they are orphans without a home in the United States. This has to do with changes in HMong family and social structure. In Laos, the HMong lived as an extended family in a clan-based social structure. Yang Dao emphasizes that:

...the birth rate among the Hmong is relatively high ... for whom having many children is a blessing. ... Hmong political and social organization is based primarily on the clan and the extended family... Thus very large families of ten, twenty or more people may be found living under the same roof and under the leadership of the beloved "pattern families." (Yang 1993:18,21,22)

Additionally, the HMong regard the clan as their foundation of social structure, as Yang notes:

In addition to the ubiquitous family group, the Hmong are divided into patrilineal clans. There are 19 such clans in Laos: Chang, Cheng, Chu, Fang, Hang, Her, Khang, Kong, Kue, Lor or Lo, Ly or Lee, Moua, Phang, Tang, Thao, Vue, Xiong, Vang and Yang. (Yang 1993:23)

The HMong also consider the clan as the continuity of their ethnic genealogy. Yang further explains that:

An important difference between the family and the clan can be seen at once: the family has a fairly elastic character while the clan is a fixed entity. Divorce and migration may scatter the family, but clan ties are permanent. Every individual automatically takes the patronymic name at birth, bears it until death, and, if a man, passes it on to his children. (Yang 1993:23)

However, this whole structure has been changed due to a different method of migration by the HMong.
A large number of Vietnamese refugees were sponsored by government organizations which gave them intensive assistance in order to accelerate their assimilation into American society. Unlike Vietnamese refugees, the Hmong came to the United States, not through U.S. government sponsorship, but by non-profit private religious groups. These groups could only afford to sponsor small family units, rather than large extended family groups of two to three generations. Subsequently, Hmong extended family members were forced to divide into smaller family units to qualify for sponsorship in the United States.

Family members suffered from this separation, and many lost the familiar physical and emotional support of a large family. Consequently, many Hmong and in particular the elders, are unable to adapt their lives to the reality of the small nuclear family units they find themselves in.

The Hmong Studies

Some important studies of the Hmong today include Hmong anthropological studies of animistic religion and traditional healing by Hein (1997), and other anthropological studies by Hendricks, Dowing and Deinnard (1986), Chan (1994), and Donnelly (1997), historical studies by Quincy (1995) and Yang (1993), and cultural anthropological perspectives, by Garrett (1974), Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton (1990), Ronard (1988), Miyares (1998). Of particular importance to my thesis are the studies by Chen (1994), Quincy (1995), and Donnelly (1997). These studies delved into some specific issues of the Hmong. Chan describes what the Hmong are experiencing in the United States from the Hmong perspective. Quincy addresses the history of the Hmong people. Donnelly studies the changing lives of the Hmong women. In addition, one of the famous Hmong authors in Australia is G. Yia Lee (1997), who has done numerous
studies from various perspectives on the Hmong. Lee not only writes about the Hmong, but also criticizes and makes further clarification of the relevant published literature.

Additionally, since 1994, numerous theses, dissertations, and journal articles in various fields have been written about the H Mong. There are three master degree theses by Yamamoto (1994), Smith (1994), and Lindell (1995), all of which are about the H Mong residing in Eureka. Yamamoto focuses his anthropological study on the H Mong people's cultural adaptation and integration. Smith emphasizes the resettlement programs of the H Mong people through the service providers' perspective. Lindell studied the medical pluralism of the H Mong. None of these studies investigated the resettlement program from the H Mong refugee perspective.

Garrett presents a H Mong person's point of view in *National Geographic* as:  

If anyone offers you a solution out here and he's speaking English, pay no attention. He probably doesn't even know the problem. (1974: 111)

Therefore, it is important to review the literature of the H Mong authors, who speak their own language and who understand the H Mong situation and problems from their own life experiences. Generally, the H Mong authors present their own voice through writing about their life experiences in Laos, Thai Refugee Camps, and the United States. Furthermore, they write about their own experiences and those of their parents. There are a series of research projects on the internet, such as Hmong Studies Journals (Internet: 1997), and the Hmong Electronic Resources Project (Internet: 1995-1997). These sites provide important information for researchers of the H Mong people.

In H Mong society, males are raised for their future roles in their families. Kou Yang who was born outside of the United States explains that in the traditional H Mong society:

Hmong men assume many superior roles, and are perceived by family and society to be the breadwinners, protectors, leaders, and pillars of the family. In addition to
being perceived as important and intelligent, male children received special attention, love, care, training in hunting and leadership, and are viewed as the eventual pillars of the family. (1997:2)

In his ethnographic research related to HMong men, Yang wrote the life experiences of Mr. Zang, a senior HMong from Laos. "His family was very powerful in Laos. His father was a well known chief of many villages and his mother was from a wealthy and powerful Hmong family" (1997: 5). However, Mr. Zang found himself in different circumstances after he arrived in the U. S. with his large family, which "illustrates common experiences faced by the older generation of HMong men" (1997:3). From Mr. Zang's perspective, Yang further states:

In his (Mr. Zang) reality, having a large family means prosperity, prestige, power, and security. Life in America, however, makes it almost impossible to build such a large extended family. (1997:4)

Subsequently, Mr. Zang lost much of his prestige in life in the U.S.:

Mr. Zang spends most of his free time visiting relatives and friends, attending cultural and social activities, and participating in dispute settlement in the community. ... Although he remains visible among his relatives, friends, and elders in the Hmong community, his influence has been gradually decreasing and his leadership role is more or less a ceremonial one. ... His skills, knowledge, and wisdom are no longer useful in Fresno; .... (1997:4)

As a result, Mr. Zang found himself in an unfamiliar situation in which women make greater progress in adapting to the new culture:

... his (Mr. Zang) sister is more independent than he is. She can read, speak English, and go places on her own. It is embarrassing for Mr. Zang to see women do better in learning .... (1997:4)

As Yang illustrates with Mr. Zang's life experiences, many HMong men have experienced greater difficulties of adaptation to life in the United States than HMong women have. Yang explains four stages of cultural adaptation, which the HMong people might experience while adjusting to life in the United States:
Within the first two to four months, a newly immigrated refugee might experience the honeymoon stage of adaptation, during which s/he might feel positive and optimistic about the new country. After this euphoric stage, s/he will go through the crisis period, in which s/he begins to experience problems with transportation, job skills, and adaptation to the new environment. Further, s/he might feel isolated, insecure and inadequate in the new socio-cultural context. This might last anywhere from six months to lifetime, ... The last stage of cultural adaptation involves second generation stresses which relate to the acceptance and negotiation of the new environment and the new culture, .... (1997:7)

Therefore, many Hmong undergo a honeymoon stage, a crisis period, an isolation period followed by second-generation stresses. Yang concludes that "these men perceive the best times of their lives as having occurred in the past with their hope being in the past, and that they refuse to think or accept the future or conditions of today's reality" (1997:12). Finally, Yang suggests that the research of the Hmong is necessary because:

The Hmong are new Americans and will continue to be members of the American society. They will continue to need help to contribute to the economic, social, political, and educational strengths of this country. (1997:13)

Other Hmong authors such as G. Yia Lee (1997), Dao Yang (1993), and Kou Yang (1997) studied the Hmong people through the Hmong people's views. On one hand, having been raised in Laos and influenced by the Hmong traditional culture, these Hmong scholars obtain a deeper understanding of their culture. For example, Kou Yang found that:

The Hmong particular clan system in combination with mountain dwelling, subsistence agriculture, and ancestral worship, unilaterally shapes the upbringing, values, and behavior of Hmong men. (1997:2)

Kou Yang mentions many important cultural factors including ancestral worship in Hmong culture, which is rarely found in western scholarly works. Therefore, these studies also play an important role in the field of Hmong study.

On the other hand, having been influenced by American culture, many younger authors describe their experiences through American lenses. In many unpublished
articles, the statements are too subjective, too sentimental, and lack in-depth discussion of important topics. For example, many unpublished articles on the Internet were found describing Hmong life experiences including conflicts between the American mainstream culture and the Hmong culture. These articles relate western perspectives to the exclusion of the traditional Hmong perspectives. This is not surprising since they are written by the second generation Hmong raised in the U.S., many of whom came to the United States when they were infants or young children. Thus, they may not remember the various life experiences of their homeland. Additionally, they may have lost a thorough understanding of the intrinsic significance of their traditional culture as well as their mother tongue. These articles are significant because they express the opinions and the concerns of the younger Hmong-Americans. However, they may not fully express the opinions of the senior Hmong-Americans.

Americans who do not understand the Hmong culture, tend to ask newly arriving Hmong people many 'why' questions. A lot of these 'why' questions disturb the Hmong people who may find such questions to be rude. Some Hmong believe that 'why' questions would never be asked in their culture because, as a member of one's culture, everybody understands why they do what they do. For instance, Americans may ask "why the Hmong parents raise so many children." The answer to this question is not simple and it requires an explanation of an important Hmong cultural factor. Having a large family is a positive cultural practice in the Hmong society. A large family signifies the strength of a family in the agrarian lifestyle of Laos.

ENDNOTES

1 The Yellow River region is a plain of the Yellow River. This was the place where the Han culture originated around four thousand eight hundred years ago. The southern part including the provinces of Zhejiang, Hobei, Fujian, and Guangdong were not influenced
by the Han culture. During the Han Dynasty, the Han culture spread southward. Later, the meaning of the word 'mun' also gradually changed. The demand imposed upon the southern non-Han people by the hegemony of the Han culture and the need to adapt to the stronger Han culture in order to survive are two major factors which help to explain why non-Han peoples in the south were assimilated. They assimilated into the Han culture and became the same as the Han inhabiting the Yellow River region. Therefore, the word "mun" currently no longer means "uncivilized or barbarian peoples of other than the Han Chinese." It is true that within the last two thousand years, those uncivilized provinces were Hanized and later in the late eighteenth century, places such as Zhejiang and Guandong, were the earliest provinces contacted by other parts of the world. For these reasons, today the southern peoples in Yellow River Region of China are no longer called "mun people."

2 The ethnic minorities, including the HMong in China, were politically persecuted. Under the domination of the Han Chinese, the term "a Chinese Nation" or "a Chinese People" politically consisted of the five major ethnic groups which are the Han, the Manchurian, the Mongolian, the Hui (Islamic Chinese), and the Tibetan. It is ironic that there are obviously more than five ethnic groups in China. The dominant Han government names only those five very different ethnic groups as one entity and defined all of them as "a Chinese People." Therefore, "the Han" specifically indicates an ethnic group while "the Chinese" generally refers to those five ethnic groups.

Except for two dynasties, Yuan and Qing, the Han established all dynasties. Politically, "a Han tribe" is a dominant group; however, culturally speaking, the Han is merely one of the ethnic groups among all. It is inappropriate to use 'the Han' and 'the Chinese' together as 'the Han Chinese' in a certain historical context.

For instance, an article on the background of the HMong, relates the matter of political persecution in China. It was written as "these peaceful HMong peasants began to be attacked by invaders from the North, the Han Chinese" (Bliatout, et al. 1988:1). Western scholars usually understand all Chinese are the Han Chinese. The Han however were not always the only dominant group. For instance, Mongolian people ruled over China in the Yuan dynasty and Manchurian people ruled over China in the Qing dynasty. The Mongolian and the Manchurian are different ethnic minorities from the Han.

However, using "the Chinese persecuted the HMong" is generally correct but not "the Han Chinese". As a matter of fact, it is "the Manchu Chinese" government who oppressed ethnic groups, including the Han, the Tibetan, the Hui, the Miao (the HMong), the Yi, etc. which caused substantial HMong migration. Thus, it is acceptable to write "the Chinese persecuted the HMong in Qing dynasty," yet it is incorrect to use the word "the Han Chinese persecuted the HMong people" in this context.

3 Currently, there are seven tones in the HMong language. From the first tone to the seventh tone are respectively marked as seven consonant 'm, s, g, d, j, b, and v.' "HMong language in the United States is generally written using the Romanized Phonetic Alphabet (RPA) ... . Final consonant letters indicate the tone of the word, and are not pronounced" (Donnelly 1994: vii). Any word with the consonant 'm' at the end indicates
the first tone, and any word with the consonant letter 's' at the end indicates the second tone and so forth. For example, the words White Mong (Hmoob Dawb) are both in the sixth tone as we can easily distinguish according to their final consonant letters 'b.'

Likewise, explaining the word "mun" itself from the tone, sometimes spelled as "mung" in English, must be pronounced in the second tone in Chinese. The word "mun" or "mung" (the second tone) in Chinese language and the White "Mong" (the sixth tone) in Hmong language are apparently very similar, yet of course they contain different meanings. The confusion and the complexity with these two words are not a matter of spelling, but a matter of pronunciation. For a fuller explanation refer to "White Mong Dictionary."

Yang Dao, a Hmong author, says that the word "H'Mong" means man or human beings (Yang Dao 1993: xvi). The true meaning of the H'Mong is still currently under debate. In reality, however, the underlying definition of the name "H'Mong" is based upon both political and historical factors, rather than what the H'Mong people themselves prefer.

Myanmar is a new name of ‘Burma.’ According to the Burmese official document of the command number 2 / 89 announced on the eighteenth of June 1989, the word ‘Burma’ refers merely to ‘Burman,’ one of the ethnic minorities in the nation. In fact, the actual word in the national theme is supposed to represent all ethnic groups within the nation. Therefore, the word ‘Burma’ in the current national theme will be corrected as ‘Myanmar’ (State Law and Order Restoration Council’s Commands 1989:661).
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study will address the question why has the adult HMong refugee population failed to adapt to life in the United States? The purpose of my study is the discovery of ideas about adaptation to a new culture for a people from a pre-literate society and cultural continuity through their teenage children.

My study will examine two generations of HMong refugees in the United States. This is a qualitative study, which explores the cultural differences and conflicts between the host country and the HMong refugees.

In addition to a review of the literature, this study was conducted using face-to-face interviews of forty people (see figure 3.1 in appendix 7), twenty Laotian born HMong parents and twenty non-Laotian born HMong children (Human Subjects approval number 97-69). Many in this sample speak only a little English or do not speak English at all (see figure 3.2 in appendix 7); thus, a HMong-English speaking translator was needed for interviewing some adults. Non-Laotian born HMong children include both those born in a Thai Refugee Camp and those born in the United States. This entire teenage sample was educated in the United States (see figure 3.3 in appendix 7), and they speak clear English. I conducted eight adult interviews with the assistance of a HMong-English speaking translator. I conducted all twenty non-Laotian born teenagers' interviews in English and one adult interview in Thai language, which is a language I am familiar with. The rest of the adults' interviews were done both in English and in HMong.
Sample Size

My interview sample totals forty HMong people. They include twenty HMong parents and twenty of their offspring. In cases where there were no teenagers in the household, I chose teenagers from the relatives of the adults of those households.

According to the U.S. census data, there are approximately 395 HMong living in the city of Eureka (1990: C90STF1A). In comparison with other ethnic minorities from Asia, such as Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese, the HMong are the largest minority group residing in Eureka. I interviewed thirty-seven people who live in Eureka. The ratio of my sample size is 10.88 percent of the total HMong population in Eureka. In other words, approximately one out of every ten people was selected for interview for this study.

The U.S. census data has shown that there are twelve HMong living in the city of Arcata (1990:C90STF1A). There are three teenagers included in the interview sample who live in Arcata. Thus, the ratio of my sample size is 25 percent of the total HMong population in Arcata.

Choosing the Sample

For choosing the sample, I first of all had to gain entry to the HMong community. To do this I had to establish a trustworthy relationship before I started the formal interviews. I began with my connection to the HMong population through the family with whom I was working as a volunteer. My volunteer work
was conducted through the Refugee Extension Program (R.E.P.) in Youth Educational Services at Humboldt State University.

There were three ways of choosing my sample. First I examined the R.E.P. clients' list and reviewed their suitability for my study with my translator. She identified people on the list who had teenage children educated in the United States. Additionally, we selected different Hmong clans (according to their last name1) from which to draw our sample. The clans included Cheng, Her, Moua, Thao, Vang, and Xiong.

Secondly, I enlarged my sample by asking the first interviewee the names and phone numbers of other families who were appropriate for my study. In other words, I used the "snowball" technique to extend my sample. In this way, I enlisted research subjects from another five families. Finally, I had an opportunity to participate in a Hmong traditional wedding. During the wedding ceremony I met the family from the Cheng clan who agreed to participate. Overall, the sample was drawn from twelve families that comprised six different clans in the Hmong community. Finally, the sample included eleven males and nine females in the adult group and, six males and fourteen females in the teenage group (see figure 3.1 in appendix 7).

Selecting Categories

Through my observations, field notes, and informal interviews, I accumulated the most common differences and problems of both older and younger generations. Five categories resulted from this information and they are: language preference, religious values, family values, peer association, and socialization. I developed the questionnaires based on these categories.
Both the adult and teenager questionnaires contained fifty-three questions relating to the five categories. There were four questions on language preferences, six questions on religious values, eleven questions on family values, twenty-three questions on intergenerational relations dealing with peer association, and five questions on socialization. Finally, the last four questions provided background information (see appendixes 1 & 2). All of these questions were selected from the most common topics that the Hmong people discuss among themselves. I took note of the topics while volunteering in the Hmong family or attending the Hmong students' cultural events and Hmong community activities. These five categories are important to both older and younger generations. These areas can be a direct or an indirect reflection of the reality of the Hmong people, such as their life experiences and their concerns. Following is a brief description of each category:

1. Language preference

This variable is to explain the importance of the non-material language aspect of culture. According to Schaefer and Lamm:

... Language tells us a great deal about a culture.... [It] is the foundation of every culture, [and] an abstract system of word meaning and symbols for all aspects of culture... humans can manipulate symbols in order to express abstract concepts and rules.... Unlike some other elements of culture, language permeates all parts of society.... [Language] also serves to shape the reality of a culture.... Every aspect of the culture needs to be transmitted by language.... Therefore, people invariably depend on language for the use and transmission of the rest of a culture. (1997: 37)

Samovar and Porter say that "One of the most theoretical formulations concerning language is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which in essence states that language is a
guide to social reality and implies that it is not simply a means of reporting experience but, more importantly, a way of defining experience" (1995:153). This hypothesis generates "the idea that cultures evolve different languages because their social realities are different." Many co-cultures in the U.S. are influenced by the dominant culture. "We can thus examine the values and behavior of co-cultures by examining their language" (1995: 166).

Also, Berger and Luckmann explain, "The common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification. Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of language I share with my fellowmen [sic]. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life" (Wallace 1999: 280).

For example, with their American-raised children, many senior Hmong encounter contradiction within their family. In particular, the Hmong parents face the difficulty of trying to communicate in both English and Hmong languages at home with their children. On the one hand, many Hmong parents speak very little English. On the other hand, Hmong language is a significant tool for transmitting cultural inheritance from one generation to another. Hence, the parents tend to speak the Hmong language at home to their children, which may reduce the chance for the parents to learn English. Therefore, the amount of culture that will be transferred through language from one generation to the next will depend on the quality of their relationship.

2. Religious values

A person's beliefs or religious values come from his or her world view. According to Samovar and Porter:
The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.... Such views have been part of every culture for centuries and help define its deep structure.... Most scholars agree that the how and why behind a culture's collective action can be traced to its world view, family structure, and history and government. Working together, these three social forces create, transmit, maintain, and reinforce the basic elements found in all cultures. They are used to tell each member what to expect from life and how to live in his or her culture. (1995: 114)

A primary source of our worldview is religion. Samovar and Porter explain it this way:

It is clear that religion and culture are inextricably entwined.... It is religion that Serena Nanda observes, 'deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the origin of society and groups within the society, the relationship of individuals and groups to one another, the relation of humankind to nature.' The issues of religion are thus the issues of worldview. ... Knowing about religion can help us to understand values and behavior, or at least find explanations for perceived behavior. (1995: 115, 116)

Therefore, religion shapes our worldview and regulates our behavior. "Knowing a person's religious view of the world helps us understand him or her" (1995: 126).

Their American peers' group association impacts the value systems of the HMong children. Consequently, they do not embrace the same values as their parents. Thus, it is essential to understand the HMong religion because the HMong values system is religious based. A HMong author agrees that "Religion is the most powerful force on this earth.... In the HMong culture, culture and religion are interwoven to the point that distinction is not clear" (Moua 1995: 1).
3. Family values

In the HMong culture, there is no distinction between the individual and the family. Samovar and Porter emphasize that:

... it nevertheless calls attention to the importance of family as a crucial element in every human being's life.... Although a culture's values and worldview derived primarily from its predominant religious views and cultural history, the family is the primary caretaker of these views and values and transmits them to new members of the culture. Knowing the voices of the family and the words of those voices enables you to understand the link between the deep structure of culture and the way that deep structure finds expression... different cultures create different families. (1995: 128, 129)

This is especially true in many Asian cultures. Since the HMong culture differs from American culture, their family values are also different. In the HMong culture, family values are a primary concern for both older and younger generations. Within a family, similar family values reinforce the family cohesion among its members.

4. Peer Associations

Among the teenage HMong, peer association is one of the most influential factors contributing to the differences and conflicts in their family's life. This is especially true of friendship groups in which "A teenager may dress and act in ways that run counter to her or his family socialization in order to be accepted by a particular group" (Appelbaum & Chambliss 1997:121).

5. Socialization

The role of socialization is an important social factor in human development. From his study of the HMong people, Robert Shuter found that they
lived in a much different society from that in which they live today. Shuter says that:

The Hmong lived isolated in the mountains of northern Laos.... [They] are essentially an oral people who had no written language.... [Their] society is arranged sociologically and politically into groups, with clan and family the pre-eminent groups. In Laos the Hmong farmed in small groups, socialized in small groups and, as children, were often taught about agriculture, Hmong customs, and animistic beliefs in small groups. Without books, oral people like the Hmong learned only from others and became dependent on people and groups in the community, their only source of information.... Hence, individual study does not exist in an oral society, which promotes group-centered values. (Shuter 1995: 214, 215)

Shuter explains that the Hmong people are group-centered which contributes to their oral society. The Hmong people learn things mainly through "a small group" in their oral society. Yet in the United States people learn things through many other ways, such as reading, TV-watching, and schooling. This may be one of the major obstacles for the Hmong when transitioning from Hmong group-centered society to an American society that emphasizes individualism.

Human Subject Committee Approval

To get approval from the Human Subjects Committee for this research was difficult. I worked with my thesis committee on developing the initial interview questionnaires. My sample included the teenage population, and this made it more difficult to be approved. The teenagers are classified as the most vulnerable group and are, therefore, subject to special protection rights. Because the law protects teenagers, every single question on the questionnaire has to be carefully examined. Before the formal interviews started, I tested the interview questionnaires. To do this, I conducted sample interviews through April 1998. After that, every single question was revised numerous times through my thesis committee. Eventually
the Human Subjects Committee approved both sets of my questionnaires. I finally started the formal interviews in the beginning of May 1998.

**Consent Form**

The Human Subjects Committee requires that each interviewee sign a consent form to authorize the interview. I failed a number of times due to my unfamiliarity with this process. From this experience, I realized that a Hmong language consent form (see appendix 3) was needed for non-English speaking parents. I revisited them with my interpreter or with someone whom the interviewees knew and trusted. Thus, a second visit was always necessary to make the interviewees feel comfortable and understand what the researcher was doing. Eventually, through the assistance of my translator and others, the interviewees agreed to sign the consent forms.

In the Hmong society, a person's word is as strong as a written form. As newcomers in the United States, according to several interviewees, many Hmong were cheated because of their naiveness and trustworthy characteristics. That is the reason they wanted to be reassured before signing any form which they did not quite understand. Therefore, obtaining a signature on a consent form needs an elaborate explanation. From my experience, explaining the forms in the Hmong language helped me to gain entry to the research population.

**The Interview Process**

I used one set of questionnaires for each group (see appendices 1 & 2). I used a tape recorder to record the interviewees' answers. I turned off the tape recorder after the interview was completed and chatted with the interviewees'
family members, or watched Hmong movies with them. I transcribed the recorded tapes of the interviews within two weeks.

The formal interviews were initiated in May 1998, and continued through June, July, and August 1998. Each of the English language interviews took approximately sixty minutes and those interviews requiring both Hmong and English languages took approximately two hours each. Hmong's concept of time was more of a problem for my interview schedule then I anticipated. Regarding time, Samovar and Porter explain that people of Asian cultures are polychronic people. That means that "they do not perceive appointments as iron-clad commitments and therefore often break them. They emphasize people more than schedules" (1995:209). Consequently, some of my Hmong interviewees changed plans quite often without advising me.

Another characteristic of polychronic people is that they are more concerned with having people close to them than with privacy (Samovar and Porter 1995:209). Therefore, to find a private room for interviewing teenagers was difficult. Parents preferred that I conduct those interviews in their presence. However, for reasons of confidentiality, I needed to interview the teenagers alone. To do this, I had to find ways to isolate the teenagers from their parents. I did this by returning when their parents were not present or by inviting the teenagers to go to my home for the interview.

Additionally, I had to gain the trust of my Hmong interviewees. Unless they are comfortable and have confidence in the researcher, they will not answer questions in depth. Consequently, my initial contacts with them over the telephone were not successful. Hmong people are generally shy with strangers and often reluctant to talk to strangers on the phone. It was necessary for me to meet
them face-to-face and introduce myself. Only then could I ask permission for the interviews. Before I started the formal interviews, I visited the families on two or three occasions to gain their trust and to minimize the distinction and distance of "researcher and interviewee." This mutual trust relationship encouraged the interviewees to talk more about their life experiences.

I discovered that it was crucial to interview the teenagers first and then interview their parents. I found out that if I interviewed the teenagers first, the interview was conducted smoothly. However, if I had already interviewed the parents before I interviewed the teenagers, then the teenagers might think that I am a friend of their parents and they were reluctant to talk to me. This happened on two occasions during my sample interview in the developing stages of my questionnaires. Consequently, I interviewed teenagers before I interviewed the adults.

Transcribing the Data

Each interview took me approximately five to eight hours to transcribe from the tape into written data. There was also times when I needed to further clarify data on the recording. If the answers were not clear, I had to call the interviewees for clarification. When the transcription was completed, I erased the tapes and kept only written notes.

ENDNOTES

1 Generally, different clans have different last names. According to the interviewees, last names of the HMong people are one of the most important culturally unique factors. The individual HMong cannot change or create his or her own last name under any circumstance. For example, people with the Cheng will always be a part of the Cheng's family or Cheng's clan. Within the same
clan, the last name means that all the members in this family are of the same family source.

However, many Hmong moved from one place to another throughout history. For that reason, some minor changes have taken place within one clan, such as changes of their spoken language, folk stories, legends, and also because of distance between members of the same last name. For example, the same Cheng last name may not know another person with the same last name from a different area due to a long period of separation in the past. Although the same Cheng do not know each other by appearance, they believe that all the Chens are from the same clan.
CHAPTER 4
The Failure of the Assimilation Plan

The U.S. plan of assimilation for the HMong people includes refugee resettlement programs and immigrant reeducation programs which have been proven ineffective for several reasons. At the outset, there was no orientation program for the HMong people to prepare them to handle the complex American lifestyle, such as learning the language and other differences of the two countries. Also, the American public were not prepared for the arrival of a large contingent of HMong people. For this reason, after the HMong arrived, they inevitably confronted various problems. According to Dunnigan, Olney, McNall, and Spring:

The HMong were relatively unknown to the American public when they began arriving in the United States from Thailand refugee camp[s] during the spring of 1976. (1996: 191)

Likewise, Finnan concludes that:

Since 1975 the country has absorbed thousands of refugee students from Southeast Asia. These students have been a challenge to teachers, schools, and districts because of their special needs and because their needs are far from uniform. ... In the late 1970s it had become very difficult for some districts to serve refugee children, .... The problems most frequently cited by school personnel were:

1. Refugee students take too much time from teachers and other students suffer.
2. Too few resources are available to help meet the students' needs.
3. Tensions between refugee students and other students exist.
4. Federal funds for program are inadequate and may be available only in the short term, thus creating a financial burden for districts. (Finnan 1988: 120, 121)
Finnan's article strongly suggests that the U.S. government was not ready to welcome 150,000 refugees in 1975, yet they did. She further states that the school teachers suffered from the unexpected diverse background of the Southeast Asian refugee students and such a poor preparation negatively influenced both populations:

It became clear when the first 150,000 refugees arrived in the United States in 1975 that programs for [mainland] Southeast Asian students had to be established. Most districts however, found that it was difficult to establish programs. No materials designed for Southeast Asian students existed prior to 1975, and there was a severe shortage of trained bilingual staff; in addition, few educators were familiar with the cultures of Southeast Asian refugees. They were also frustrated by the vast differences in educational background and culture represented by Southeast Asian refugee students. ... Local government officials and social service providers felt overwhelmed by the influx of refugees. (Finnan 1988:121)

Humphrey found that "when the Hmong first arrived ... servicing agencies were unprepared to work with them because little was known about the people or their culture" (1991: 3).

Although unprepared, the United States accepted a large number of mainland Southeast Asia refugees with diverse needs at one time. This resulted in inadequate reeducation and refugee resettlement programs.

Another reason for the failure of the U.S. assimilation plan is the unwillingness of the American public to understand the Hmong culture. This stems from lack of interest by U.S. officials in understanding non-western cultures, especially regarding third world countries, even though such an interest would improve the effectiveness of the assimilation programs in the long run. For example, Tollefson argues that:
Immigrant education programs are not only a light illuminating for immigrants the myth of American society; they are also a mirror of the society, reflecting the society's own vision of itself. The mirror provided by the Americanization movement of the turn of the century and the refugee program of today reflect the persistent belief that American society has little or nothing to learn from immigrants' cultures. (Tollefson 1989:58)

Refugees received assistance, without understanding the procedure of the refugee resettlement policies, the American public misunderstood that refugees were "receiving cars and homes from the federal government. These problems created a negative resettlement atmosphere in many localities, ..." (Tollefson 1989:58).

According to three educated HMong interviewees:

We are having problems in the United States, so who is going to be blamed. Of course, everybody said that it is all our people's fault, but fewer people are interested in a true story.

This is also the same concern of many other interviewees:

Once, a person told me to go back to Laos and I replied to the person that he should go ask the President of the United States. As a super-power country in the world, the United States is not good at handling the HMong issue. Even though most white people can read and write, but most of them in this area [Eureka] do not understand the history, so they came and blame us.

The interviewee further explains that one of the reasons it is impossible to return to Laos is that the communist Pathet Laos is now ruling the country. An adult interviewee explained:

Once the Pathet Laos government found out a person who worked for the CIA in the past then that person will be disappeared which means that possibly the person may be killed or imprisoned.

A further reason for HMong failure to assimilate into the U.S. mainstream culture is that the plan itself is too ideological. For example, assimilation is often an underlying principle for the U. S. government's attempts to solve the immigrant
problems. They strongly believe that assimilation is a better solution for all the immigrant issues, including those of the HMong. According to Lindell:

... the government attempted to resettle the refugees [includes the HMong people] in diverse geographical areas so as to speed the process of assimilation. (1994: 15)

The HMong population do not benefit from this program due to their attachment to their traditional culture. Lindell says that:

The HMong maintain their traditional ways of life as much as possible. ... their communities in the United States can be characterised as close-knit and, for the most part, unintegrated with the larger society. (1994:15)

Additionally, the senior HMong population expect to return to Laos, so they believe that assimilation is unnecessary. Smith notes that the elder HMong are:

living in the memories and clinging to the hope of returning to Laos, others are resigned to being here, but nurture the hope that their grandchildren will return to the homeland. (1992: 73)

The HMong have a very strong cultural and ethnic consciousness, as Lindell states:

the present ethnic consciousness of the HMong ... is a strong feeling that they all belong to a unique people who are not only different from other peoples but who are positively resolved to avoid any kind of assimilation. This is especially true for older generations. (1994: 16)

However, the authorities ignore the seriousness of these psychological problems. Moreover, they use scapegoating theory to blame the victims. As Tollefson explains, refugees are suffering persistent, serious problems:

In order to sustain the underlying principles of success ideology, both the Americanization program and the refugee program deny the contradictions that these serious problems imply. The Americanization movement did this by blaming immigrants for "failing" to assimilate. (1989: 59)

In addition to this underlying ideological principle, cultural diversity is also seen
as a threat to the host country. Tollefson believes that the American population is convinced that "cultural diversity was unpatriotic and that immigrants are inferior" (Tollefson 1989:59).

As a result, the Hmong people need to deal with their own difficulties. Trueba et al. explain that:

Resettlement is too often seen as a process in which the host society serves, trains and molds newly-arrived refugees into productive members of the larger community. The reality is that the Hmong themselves in La Playa and other communities have, out of necessity, become responsible for their own resettlement. (1990: 43)

Unlike their parents, many younger Hmong are better at coping with life in the United States. Western scholars believe that the process of assimilation should be higher in the younger generations than it is for the older generation. Indeed, Lindell has found the process of assimilation is gradually changing in the younger generation. "Some assimilation seems to be occurring presently among Hmong teenagers" (Lindell 1995:16). Chan notes that "... schools in American society have functioned as major agents of assimilation and as builders of national unity" (Chan 1997:34).

Further, Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton note that "younger Hmong begin to internalize American values and to put distance between themselves and their older family and clan members" (1990:xii). This situation challenges the traditional hierarchical relationship and the parents' authority. As Rick and Forward found in their study of Hmong teenagers in high school:

... [I]f the teenagers become family spokespersons. Parents' authority is eroded if they are forced to depend on their children for help with language and social issues. (Rick and Forward 1992:86)
Too much dependence on their children for help with English in daily life lowers the older Hmong parents' self-esteem. Unlike Hmong parents who highly respected their parents in Laos, they found themselves disrespected by their children in the U.S. On one hand, the parents worry that such behavior on the part of many younger Hmong people brings disgrace to the family. Yet, on the other hand, the younger Hmong must cope with family pressure from living in two highly different cultures. As Rick and Forward state:

> Students who perceived differential levels of acculturation (assimilation) within their families may be feeling the pressure that stems from living in two cultures -- US. at school and Hmong at home. (1992:92)

As a result, "assimilation plays an important role" within many Hmong families (Rick and Forward 1992: 92). Among the younger Hmong, the higher level of assimilation into U.S. mainstream culture causes more differences and conflicts within the Hmong families. These differences therefore create distance between two generations, and the distance eventually results in changes within the families.

Traditional Hmong animistic religious beliefs also act as an obstacle to assimilation into mainstream American society. This may contribute to the breakdown of Hmong family unity.
CHAPTER 5
HMong Religious Beliefs

Animism

The traditional HMong religion is called animism.

[The HMong believe that humans, plants, and animals have a spiritual essence... Spirits also exist in the unseen realm, and can affect the lives of humans... The spiritual and physical aspects of the traditions and worldview are deeply intertwined. Beliefs about illness cannot be viewed in a separate light from spiritual and cosmological beliefs. (Lindell 1995:17)

Thus, there are two main aspects, the spiritual and the physical, in the HMong religion. The spiritual aspect manifests in the HMong animistic religious ritual, such as believing in shamanism and reincarnation. The physical aspect expresses itself in the HMong people's way of living, such as doing good things and being a good person on earth.

The HMong religious belief is non-institutionalized. They do not have a designated place or time for religious practices. The HMong practice their religious beliefs both in their shaman healing ritual and their ways of life; the two are intertwined. In other words, for the HMong people, their spiritual beliefs are one with the philosophy of how to live their life. The HMong religious practices are deeply related to the cultural practices and vice versa. Religion and culture, for the HMong, are inextricably entwined. An adult interviewee explains this concept:

We do not convert our religion because we strongly believe that if you convert our religion then you won't sacrifice yourself for your parents any more. Our culture emphasizes that parents give birth to you and you have to respect them and remember them, so that's why we worship our ancestors.
The interviewees used the terms "religion" and "culture" interchangeably, emphasizing the interconnectness of the two.

The Hmong believe that there is an unseen or spiritual world behind this physical world. Generally, they view a person's physical illness as a negative aspect and negative expression of the spiritual world that can only be healed by a shaman. A shaman has the spiritual power to explain the cause of a person's illness and, furthermore, make the spirit happy by offerings and religious ritual. In Lindell's study, it is explained as:

Hmong shamans, called *tug txiv neeb*, are the only individuals in the society who can interact directly with the spiritual world; thus shamans are of vital importance in Hmong culture. (1995:17)

A thirty-two-year-old female interviewee shares her experience:

One time I got really sick and I visited doctor but it didn't go away. And then they called a shaman. The shaman checked and said that I passed some places that I shouldn't go. Maybe some places like their property or the territory of the evil spirit or so. That's why the spirit is not happy. We believe that if the medicine can not cure us, then it means that the spirit is bothering you and does not go away from your body. That's why you got sick... After the shaman did everything. I feel better. That's why I believe it. My mom used to tell me don't go out at night and now I told my kids, too, not to go strange places at night.

A shaman is a traditional healer who functions as a professional in the Hmong culture. Lindell further explains that:

The Hmong have no institutionalised headship of any kind, and while individuals may specialise as blacksmiths or marriage go-betweens, the only formally specialised role in a Hmong community is that of the shaman. (Lindell 1995:18)

However, a shaman is different from other religious healers because:

[A shaman] is a master of ecstasy, or psychopomp. He specializes in
trance during which his soul transcends to the spirit world. Unlike the possessed person, the shaman controls his helping spirits. (Lindell 1995:19)

Although shamans are predominately males, sometimes females can be shamans.

Shamans have certain limitations. A male interviewee explains:

In Hmong culture, females cannot conduct all the funeral and wedding services... But in performing shaman ritual, women can do it too. They can do other jobs beside shaman work too. But then they don't have time to learn all the shaman skill, how to heal and what to say and all the spiritual things and they might not heal the sickness.

He further explains:

In our culture, I would say that shamanism is the main part of our religion. We can't tell that a person is a shaman or not, unless you saw the tools they use. They use special tools to perform the ritual.

Shamanism is not a skill in a technical sense, but rather an inherited gift. A father of four children explains it this way:

... Not everyone can do it. But only a few that they think they could have the power to cure. You have to fight with the spirit. Even you want to be a shaman, you couldn't. 'Cause you have to be chosen by the shaman spiritual power. Once you are chosen, either you do it or you died, you can't escape.

Therefore, a shaman is a person who is appointed by spiritual power to perform the religious ritual for casting away the sickness and bringing forth good fortune. The shaman practices are very important in the lives of the Hmong people.

Experiences in Shaman Healing

Regardless of the difficulties the Hmong experienced in locating authentic shaman in the United States, they still maintain a very strong belief in shaman practices. The following accounts are testament to the function of shaman practices in the Hmong people's lives. A female interviewee explains:
I remember one time, I was sick and I got red spots all over my body. I got rash all over and I took medicine. Red spots go away but they come back later again and again. The shaman do with the egg for me. I say anything I want to say. I think it was like took everything out of your body kind of meaning... Egg is white and it means pure and it can purify our body... you know it has nothing mixing inside. So shaman need to say thing like... you are like an egg, everything is clean and you are egg and you are clean. The egg goes around my body and whatever unclean thing in the body will be out. It happens to me. That’s hard to explain but it works. After the shaman cracked out the egg, we saw a lot of little tiny bits in it, like a lot of BB gun’s bullets came out. A lot around the egg and around the whole yoke too. After that I felt better. That’s how I believe.

Later on, the interviewee continued:

I got really sick again last time. I was in the bed and couldn’t get up for days. Another female shaman perform the thing for me again. She also used egg. After shaman cracked out the egg she looked at the egg and said: "Yeah! Somebody is really angry at you and they did it to you and make you sick." She also said: "These people sometimes really like you but sometimes really hate you." After she do that thing I get better and better.

Thus, by performing the ritual, a shaman can interpret things in the spiritual way for the sick persons. Primarily, a shaman functions as a communicator between the spiritual and physical worlds for healing purposes. By performing shaman ritual, they make the evil spirits happy to heal the sick.

Shamans sacrifice certain kinds of animals to complete the healing process. A male interviewee said that:

I think our shaman thing is like the Native Indian a little bit. All we need to do is to call shaman to come to our house. He or she will ask the spirit what’s wrong. Then after that, he will tell us to kill pig, or chicken. If the shaman said he only needs a chicken to go to that place to make the spirit come back, then we prepare a chicken. If he said he needs a pig then we kill pig. Later the shaman will come back again do the ritual. After one year he will come back again to check everything and do it again to make a new life.
Therefore, the family of the sick person must follow the shaman's directions exactly in order to please the spirits.

Reincarnation and Parents' Behavior

The H'Mong believe that there is an afterlife, which is determined by their current lives. Many interviewees have different experiences. For example, a male who speaks English well explains the connection between the belief of shamanism and reincarnation. He said:

We believe that there is reincarnation. For example, my grandfather was a shaman and after he died his spirit will reincarnate to his son, grandson, or someone he wants to choose. Then the spirit will pass the [spiritual] power to that person to become a shaman. We usually diagnose one person whether he or she is a shaman when he was 13-14 years old. But it is only one of several ways for choosing a new shaman.

A life, in the H'Mong belief, once created, is eternal. Thus, there is another life after this life and another life after that life and so on. The H'Mong believe that a person must do well in his or her earthly life in order to gain a good life after death. Thus, the sum of a person's behavior in this life determines whether or not his or her afterlife situation will be good. An adult interviewee explained as follows:

In our culture, we believe that after a person is dead, everything he did in his life will be reviewed and then he will be sent to a place as he deserve. For example, if he killed a person's horse, he will become a horse in that person's house. If he killed a human being, he will never be reincarnated as a human being again, maybe become a very low life, like a bug, or worm or something.

The funeral service is also an important ritual in animistic religion. The correct way of serving the funeral enables the deceased person to travel without
distraction on his or her journey of reincarnation. One male who is experienced in conducting the funeral service gave these details:

I believe in reincarnation. During the funeral we play *Khang* and also killed cow, pig, and chicken to feed the guests and to remember that person, the deceased person. Killed the animal and offer to the deceased person in order to prepare food for them on the way [to be reincarnated again].

The crucial part of the funeral service is music. *Khang* is a musical instrument made out of bamboo for playing traditional Hmong music. This male and his son both can play Hmong music well. His son continued:

There are a few songs, which are very important for the deceased person to go on their journey. Once the music is played, that song and music is for the funeral only and we usually played it in final, the final music, the last one. It is very strong. The guests cannot fall asleep in funeral; otherwise, their soul will go with the music and the death one. Or the guests either stay awake or go home. They don’t want every one to stay. They will tell tired one to go home and start the final music to farewell the deceased person to another world.

The father emphasizes that to do good is important for a living person in order to accumulate good fortune for the next life:

If you are a good person, then you can be reincarnated to be a human being with wealth, and will live in nice place ... in next life. Also your spirit goes to a good place.

Another thirty-eight-year-old man believes that no matter what a person did, he or she will be rewarded or punished after he or she dies.

It is hard for me to explain it in English. We believe that once you are a person, you have to do good. Like you stole things from one person, even though that person never saw it and never knew it. One day you still will be punished, like you will be reincarnated as a pig or other animal in that person’s house and to serve that person.

A Hmong Christian also believes in reincarnation and afterlife. He said that:
A lot of people told us that they saw the person who was dead already came back to their house. Then ... when they try to talk to that person: "Hi, wait a second!" Then, that person disappeared. Some also said that one dead person came back to the kitchen. Even you see no one, but you will hear the noise of picking the spoons or pans. That was the dead person's soul came back to the kitchen to find food to eat. After the person tells the soul: "we know that you are hungry." Then the soul will stop making noise. The relatives need to offer food for the dead one. That soul will not come and bother again. That's why I believe in afterlife. Now I am Christian. But I still believe those stories.

The adults' spiritual beliefs establish the foundation for their behavior. Their beliefs, values, moral standards, and norms all derive from their religion and are manifested through their Hmong cultural uniqueness. All members of the adult Hmong group believe strongly in the principles of animism and particularly in reincarnation.

Many traditional religious practices are not as important to the younger generation that grew up outside of Laos, in the Thai refugee camps, or other countries. Those Hmong refugees who migrated to the United States when they were young believed in both animistic beliefs and Christian religion (see figure 5.1 in appendix 7). Many of them merely engaged in shaman practices out of respect for their parents. A male explained that:

I would say that I was a Christian too when I worked in Thailand, in the hospital. But my father don't like it so I will wait after he passed way and then I will change to be Christian later. Now we need to do the shaman thing, like you know the Hmong people do for the sick person. They call the spirit to come back into the sick person '[s] body and make them feel better and better. It will be the main practice of our religion.

Thus, shamanism is weakened by exposure to Christianity and other cultural practices for the younger generation of Hmong adults. Additionally, those teenagers who grew up in the United States found themselves in conflict with their parents' traditional cultural beliefs. In particular, the teenage children whose
primary acculturation is American are less concerned about the importance of animism in their lives (see figure 5.2 in appendix 7). Consequently, their parent's religious beliefs have little influence on them. For example, a female teenager said:

I've heard of it [from my parents]. If I do well now, then after I died, things will be good. If I do not do well in this life then after I died things won't be easy for us. Do I believe it myself? I think I kinda doubt it. I do not believe it, well, sometimes I do, I am not sure.

A nineteen-year-old male explains that he does not believe "the ghost part" in traditional religion:

You know ... back in Laos, we do not have electricity. It's dark everywhere at night. When I was little I always heard people talk about ghost ... from the dead people, he came back, if we do not do the right things for his funeral.... One time, my friend saw the shadow on the rock, it was on the picture, too. They said it was a ghost's shadow. They really believe it. But in the United States, we have electricity and lights everywhere. I think we do not have any ghost in the United States. We do not hear about the ghost sorties any more here. So right now I think ghost do not exist.

Two teenagers understand the intrinsic significance of the parents' religious beliefs. However, their own beliefs and attitudes often conflict with those of their parents. For example, although they said they sometimes believe the traditional religion, they personally do not practice it in their lives. That creates a greater intergenerational gap. An eighteen-year-old male said:

I like to listen to my parents talking. But sometimes they repeated too much so I got bored. Now I am in United States, things are different here so I sometimes do American way too, even though I believe our Hmong religion and culture.

Another three teenagers said that they "get caught" in two cultures. A nineteen-year-old male said:
Sometimes I feel like in two different cultures, like one of my right hand and one of my left hand. It's like ... in order to succeed in a society I must learn as much as in society I can and learn to adopt it. But on the other hand I must accommodate into my traditional culture too. The problem is in my parent's perspective what I do in the US society; they don't really approve it through their perspective.

He explains that his parents expect him to get higher education, but they do not understand about the American society.

They [the parents] do not see it [what I did] through my perspective. It's kind of ironic that they came here for one reason ... one of the reasons why they came here was that we, their kids, can get education. In order to have an education, they must adapt or assimilate into the US mainstream culture.

However, he found that the reason why his parents cannot adapt to American culture is that on the one hand, they are also "restricted" by mainstream social force. The parents, on the other hand, restricted their children as well. He elaborates:

The mainstream culture is forming them to do [to adapt a new culture, to treat the children freer]. [Also] the society has kind of restricted them to assimilate and in that sense that [restricted] force kind of eliminated them to do what they can do in that society. It is kind of ironic that "Hey, we want to bring you here [the United States] so you can have education," but yet they are the cause and they are the restriction that is holding us back. They want you to get the education but they want to do it in their way what they have proved in their mind. That's what happen and that's why... that 's what it is the basic conflicts that I've already experienced.

The children's experience is that they are held back by their parents. They believe that what causes generational conflicts is their parents' insistence that the children follow in their footsteps which is different from the mainstream American way.

Six of the HMong teenage interviewees have no religious beliefs.

Although they may have enough knowledge to explain the meaning of the HMong
religion, they do not believe in it. For example, two teenagers are able to explain the meaning of afterlife:

I think if you get old and died, your family will kill a cow or pig or chicken for you. I guess they sell the cow, I am not sure how they do it. Then... I think it is confusion and I don't get it.

My parents believe that we will be born again after we died. But I think, back in Laos, they believe in ghost, dead person's spirit come back, and all that. But now we are in America, I do not believe it.

A sixteen-year-old teenager explained the idea of the Hmong religion with a metaphor:

...My mom told us that our life is like a piece of paper. Every note and every thing that will happen to you is on that paper: such as what you gonna do, what's gonna happen to you, how you gonna die and all that things. If that paper is good and when you get there [courtroom] they [the judge] take that paper from you and you get reborn again to be human being again. There are a lot of Hmong believe in it but I don't believe it, though... I don't know. It's just all that weird stuff.

The younger teenagers are especially removed from the concept of reincarnation. A female teenager expressed so:

Once you are dead, you are dead. There is no such a thing like "reincarnation." I don't believe that.

This departure from Hmong religious beliefs expressed by the Hmong teenagers has serious consequences for the adult Hmong refugees. Since Hmong religion and culture are inseparable, a departure from religious beliefs is also a departure from the cultural values of kinship ties. These ties bind one generation to the next in a continuity of economical support. The parents are responsible for satisfying the basic needs for the young. The young, subsequently, are expected to take care of their parents when they grow too old to take care for themselves.
HMong traditional society is based on a vision of the family and clan group as a singular entity.
CHAPTER 6
Cultural and Family Values

The character of family life for the Hmong varies in different ways from that of the South Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese was subjected to the eradication of village autonomy under French colonization. The French introduced central government control that effectively eliminated control by the village elders. They flocked to the city under French and American regimes where they worked in factories and offices and attended schools. Women worked outside the home in large numbers.

Village life for the Hmong was at the center of their lives. Family ties were determined by their agrarian lifestyle. Large families were commonplace and desirable because this meant they could farm more land. The division of labor was based on the requirement of their agrarian subsistence economy. The Hmong remained autonomous and lived in agricultural collectives. Hmong society maintained a strict patriarchal household.

The structure and dynamics of the patriarchal household were at the core of men's dominant position in traditional Hmong society. In Vietnamese society men remained the primary bread winner especially in South Vietnam when "the urban economic expansion during the 1950's to 1970's had affected men and women differently .... [T]he more lucrative and prestigious jobs were held by men rather than women" (Kibria 1983:57). However, women are very much a part of the workforce and contributing members to the household economy. For example, there was an established half a million women engaged in prostitution according to Nyland (1981). Also, small business and the service sectors of the urban
economy relied heavily on the labor of women. The heavy involvement of women in trading activities is supported by survey data on the occupational background in Vietnam of Vietnamese refugees in the United States showing 60.8 percent of women in the sample indicating that they had been involved in sales or clerical jobs in Vietnam (Haines 1989:9-10). HMong households on the other hand experienced no such movement of the women to work outside the home.

The HMong traditional social organization has been established upon a community base as a collective culture. Thus, from the HMong parents' perspective, the standard of the individual's behavior, beliefs, norms, and value should originate from the community collective perspectives. One individual's reputation depends on his or her behavior and every individual must observe the same norm as their family, clan, or the community. For instance, a female teenager said that the HMong community emphasizes the controlling of female's behavior more than the male's:

My parents do not like me to go away from home. Some parents allow the children to go out, but not my parent. They concerned about that other people might say bad things, even though we [the children] are educated in school. Other people will think that the daughter wants to go out or move away because she just wants to disobey her parents.

Another female teenager said her parents are open-minded, yet she still needs to act like a HMong girl for keeping a "good reputation" in the HMong community. She explains:

I think my parent value a lot of HMong things... like speak our own language and marry only HMong guy. But it is OK for us to speak English. Also marry other race is OK, too. But other people will say bad things about you, if you married other race. My parents, they are OK about it but others not. A friend of mine married an Indian [Indian-American]. I heard that they are not happy. My mom said it is better to marry your own race.
Another fifteen-year-old teen said that her parents emphasize "their reputation."

I guess my parents care about their reputation a lot. They want me to be perfect. I said that no one is perfect. But they said: "Yes, you can." They want me only stay home. No friends and no play... It's impossible!

The expectation of the community toward female behavior is the greater pressure for the parents and the female teenagers. For example:

My parents do not give me pressure but the OTHER people gave me pressure. Now I am choosing to go to college after I finish high school. But I got pressure from other people and it is hard for me to deal with all that so far. They will keep saying that it is no good to go to college, why do you want to do that.

Different perceptions in family values and norms cause the intergenerational conflicts which generate tensions in both generations, such as the tension from lack of mutual understanding and mutual trust, and the tension from parents' high expectations of their children. A sixteen-year-old teenager suffered from being misunderstood by her parents:

... I just feel like my parents always want me to be good and perfect. My friends and I go play, so I told my mom where I am going. But she got mad at me. I always really mad at my parents. She lectured me and she didn't listen to me. They always lecture me and I am just sitting there and listening. They are that "you always give us a bad reputation." Sometimes, they think once we are together, we are definitely doing the bad things....

HMong parents do not take the children's problems seriously. For instance, they do not consider that the problem a child faces is really a problem. A male interviewee explains it:

It is really hard to communicate with my dad. I think back in Thailand and Laos, when you grow up you will find out yourself. You don't really need to ask for the advice from the elders. But in the United States, my uncle said that I should talk to my dad so my dad will understand. Then I talk to my dad. Sometimes he listens but sometimes not. The elders always think that there is no problem with us [the children]. The children's problems are
not a problem. Just don't think about it. Sounds like our problems are too minor to be a problem.

The children expressed that the reason why the parents do not understand them is that they do not understand the American culture.

My parents do not understand American culture is the most serious problem. I have to live in two cultures. I don't have life with my Caucasian friends. My parents do not understand because they are so set in their own way that they do not want to understand. So sometimes, I try to make them understand and that's hard.

My parents do not know anything. We had a lot of problems when we first arrived in the United States. My dad didn't know what was paying a rent was. They did not need to pay rent in Laos. Also, once he went to the store to get some grocery, he just put money on the counter and then he goes to pick up stuff. But then he came back, the money was gone and the store clerk made him pay again. He needed to pay twice because everything in here is different from Laos.

**Gender Conflicts**

The data indicates that gender hierarchy is one of the most significant intergenerational conflicts. By comparing the differences from both sexes in the children's group, the discrepancy between their opinions is significant. Traditional Hmong culture views the male as superior and the female as inferior. A man portrays the image of 'strong' and a woman, the image of 'weak.' Thus, females always need to be protected. But the teenagers in this study population are divided on the question of gender bias in Hmong culture. On one hand, a group, which includes three males and four females, say that parents treat all siblings equally. On the other hand, another group of three males and ten females believe that their parents treat boys and girls differently (see figure 6.1 in appendix 7).
Some believe that the reason for the unequal treatment of girls stems from their religious concept. A female interviewee and a male interviewee expressed it as following:

In our religion, girls are always treated or look down more then boys are. It actually happens in the whole religion itself. To be a girl will be harder than to be a boy. Like ... the reasons why it is harder is because the parents think that the girls will grow up and get marry and have their own life, right? So in a sense, they will not live with the girls any more, yet the boys do. So the parents treated the boys better than they treated the girls. Just more better because the boy will go to take care of them.

My parents treat me better and value me more because I am a boy. Also because boys carry on the fathers last name. We are the center ones.

Another female teenager said that her parents treat her brothers better at home:

My mom treat the older brothers better, more opportunities for them than for me. She won't let me go out and do things. But she will let my brothers go out.

In dealing with many conflicting values and norms, younger generation females feel that they have less freedom compared to females of other ethnic groups. A sixteen-year-old female expressed it this way:

I do not like that the way the parents treat the girl is totally different from they treat the guys. The parents gossip about the guys too but they do not mind about guys doing things because they are guys, they can do it. The guys have more opportunities then girls. The parents also expect the guys all go to college but now more guys dropped out than girls... see...

Another male high school graduate preparing to enter college said that:

Most of the time, my parents let me go out more often than they let my sisters. My parents or other HMong parents do not allow their daughters go out and travel. But they let the boys do it. The girls need to stay home, cook, and clean house, and help the parent.
A female in senior high school explained that her parents treated her siblings unequally due to the pressure from other people in the community. She responded:

My parents treat us unequally. The girl can't go out but the boy can go out. A lot of people will say bad things about you if you go out often.

She continued that there are different standards for boys and girls in their culture. The parents think that having long hair is a good thing for girls. Three females express a similar opinion as follows:

If a girl have long hair then they [parents and other people in the community] will say that you are "a good girl." My brother can do whatever he wants to his hair, but not the girls.

Traditional Hmong culture protects women. They do not consider that females should have too much freedom because women are weaker. For example, girls should come home at a certain time and before dark.

If you [a girl] come home late then they will say that you are a bad girl. I don't know. I guess the parents should give us [girls] more freedom and choices.

Another restriction for Hmong women is about their clothing. Women are prohibited from wearing certain kind of clothes, such as shorts. The following is the opinion of a high school girl:

My mom never let me wear shorts, even at home. She said you are not supposed to show your legs. Oh! My god, I said. I want to wear shorts. It's summer now. You know, my other friends at school, they can wear whatever they want to. Then my mom said, you are different, you are Hmong. Hmong girls do not wear shorts.

Regarding marriage, Hmong women cannot choose to live with their parents. A female complains that:
In our culture, the other thing I don't like is that when a guy married a girl and ... if she will still live with her parent then the girl will be called "disgrace to her parents" too. Because she is not really with him yet she is still with her.

The first quote, from a female teenager, and the second quote, from a male teenager, summarize gender hierarchy themes, they said:

To be a Hmong girl is stressful for me. We need to cry a lot, we do not live our own life. Our parents live it for us. If you don't listen, they'll let you get out of the house. They'll do it for real.

I think we care a lot about our traditions. Especially, male and female's roles in the family and in culture are pretty important... The most important thing in our culture is ... to know that guy is in charge in the family.

The parents' group does not have much emphasis on gender issues. Only four adults mentioned the notion of gender hierarchy as part of the traditional culture. A forty-year-old mother said:

The children need to learn a lot of thing in our culture: how to do funeral and wedding party. At the party, we, the guests cannot go and eat first before the deceased family eats the meal. If we are not important people we cannot eat first. All the elders and men eat first and we, women and the children eat later in the kitchen.

A father of seven children said that:

I want my kids to learn how to practice the wedding ceremony: how to do the boy's part and the girl's part. We want them to learn that the girl needs to live with the husband's family. We the parents will finally pull their hands together, which means "the promise" has been made. If the girl do something wrong then it is not good...

Among all the female teenagers, the data indicates negative attitudes toward living with their in-laws after marriage. Five females said that they do not
want to live with their in-laws, yet they have no choice. They felt depressed to live with them, which is one of the reasons they do not like the intramarriage within the Hmong community. For instance:

I do not like the part that girls are made out to be... sort of have to obedience. I am pretty sure this is how in every other old culture... girls need to stay home and you have to do things help your parent and ...I don't like that part. I mean the guys have their legs why they need our serve. And when the girl get married, they "HAVE TO" stay with their in-laws and serve, taken care of their in-laws too. That's why I do not like. If I married a Hmong guy, I do not have a choice. I have to move in my in-laws house.

Moreover, Hmong women have no choice on making decisions as they wish, such as moving out of the in-laws' house and staying with her parents after she is married. A female said:

I can't move out or something if my in-laws and I can not get along with. Because if I moved out, then it will be "disgrace" for me among the Hmong people. Also it is rude to do so.

Nineteen-year-old female expresses alarm about living with her in-laws in the future:

I have a friend who gets married over the summer and she doesn't like the mother in-law. They always argue. Every time they go to the same room, they will argue. I don't know, I maybe argue with my in-laws too, but ... what if we don't like each other. That's the other thing that I really don't like.

The conflicts over individual freedom versus gender hierarchy cause many teenage girls stress. The following responses explain this:

I feel depressed about not having my own way when I asked my parents. They let me do my own way sometimes, but not always. Like ... if I want to go out. They will say "no." Then I can't go out. I can't just go. You have to think and do it. My mom teach me that you have to think that why you want to do that. I will say because I want to be 'myself,' and I want to do thing by myself. If you let your parents do everything for you then you can't do it yourself.
The most depressing thing for me is that I try to fit in. I feel it is hard. Because you have to think about it... what do I have to do in order to fit in school and what do I have to do to fit in my family life. You need to really think about it to fit in. It is hard sometimes. Because when the pressure comes like an emergency or something like that, I was like ... woo.. what do I have to do. I don't know that I will choose HMong value or the American value. It is so hard to decide. If you do American way then they will say that you are HMong, so don't do American way.

The reason why a HMong woman has no rights to divorce her husband is a controversial issue among the HMong teenage girls. A sixteen-year-old teenager explained:

If you are married, in our culture, you can't really get divorce, unless the guy wants to. Only the guys can request divorce. They can get the mistresses too. That's not fair....

Another female college student born and raised in a HMong Christian family said:

The girls do not need to change her last name. But in the HMong Christian [family] the wife takes her husband's last name. My dad name is Mr. Vang; then, my mom's name will be Mrs. Vang.

Living in two cultures, the HMong females are pressured about choices and values. Two female teenagers said:

I think immigrants like us have pressure when we go to college... 'Cause American culture teaches us to make our own choice but our culture wants us to listen to our parents. For example, I want to go to other place for college but my parents want me to stay home. We need to follow the American culture and we also need to follow our culture. When I am facing this situation, then I am going to make the choice, which is best for me.

At school we were taught one thing but at home we were taught another. If I said I am HMong, then I do not know HMong culture, like you ask me about the religion, I don't know that much about it. If I said I am American, then they [my parent] will say: "Well ... you are HMong and don't do the American way." That's hard.
Three teenagers, who are seniors in high school, believe that religion is the most important aspect of HMong culture. However, they feel pessimistic about its future. One of them said:

I think our religion [the HMong religion] is the most important part of our culture. But I am not sure that it will be carried on in the future because now we [teenagers] are so Americanized already.

Another college student expresses that it is difficult to preserve the whole culture. The parents expect their children to carry on the traditional culture more than the children could follow. For example,

... My mom wants us, all of us to wear our traditional clothes on New Year days. It is hard to carry on everything in our culture. The younger HMong like us do not really emphasis that.

For the HMong refugees, both young and old, migration introduced intergenerational tension among them. At the root of these tensions are cultural gaps between the generations and a decline of the power and the authority of the HMong elders. Non-Laotian born HMong-Americans are becoming more Americanized in many ways. In particular, they tend to have an individualistic orientation, engage in freer dating practices than those promoted by HMong tradition, and adopt modes of dress and speech that reflect their American attitudes. The growing inability of the elders to control the young or slow down the pace of assimilation contributed to conflicts in the family and the erosion of traditional family values.
The West tends to view refugees in general as problematic. For example, Blalock states that:

An increase in minority percentage results in an increase in discrimination both because of heightened perceived competition and an increased power threat. (1967: 148)

In the 1980s, this view transferred to all the involuntary refugees from mainland Southeast Asia. The American public considered them a powerful threat to American society:

Refugees [who fled Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in 1975] poured out of these countries in the late 1970s, and by 1986 the Southeast Asian refugee population exceeded 800,000.... with more general complaints about the impact of refugees on cities and countries.... There were also the somewhat contradictory concerns that, on the one hand, refugees would become welfare-dependent, while, on the other hand, they would take jobs away from Americans. (Finnan 1988:120,121)

Later in the 1990s, the same view transferred to the HMong immigrants, as Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton note in their discussion of HMong immigration:

Many mainstream Americans view the arrival of new immigrants and refugees as a threat to political cohesiveness, domestic prosperity and peace. (1990: xi)

U.S. policy toward the immigrants in general and the HMong in particular is inconsistent. The HMong people believed that because of their contribution to the U.S. war effort in Laos and Vietnam, they would be welcome in the United States. However, the news media promotes the notion of immigrants and refugees as a threat to U.S. society. Consequently, since their arrival in the United States the HMong people have been subjected to various kinds of discrimination.

There are more than twenty nationalities and over one hundred ethnic groups from Asian countries living in the United States. Yet, no matter how different and separate they
are, all of them are stereotyped as "Asian Americans" (Mann 1993:12). People of ethnic groups from Asia may look alike yet they are not the same, as Mann describes:

Their differences have often been reduced to stereotypes that reflect negative images largely rooted in the psychological notion that since "they all look alike," they must all think and act alike. (1993:12)

Similarly, the fact that most Hmong are called "Chinese" annoys them. Mann thus believes that this over-generalization dates back to the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants to the U.S. in the 1840s. Since that time, instead of naming each ethnic group properly, all other groups from Asia are called Chinese.

**Life Adjustment in the U. S. for Senior Hmong**

Many Western authors believe that the Hmong people are unable to adjust to life in the United States. For example, Smith notes:

The multiple problems of refugees stem from many sources: disruption in the homeland; the flight to refugee camps and subsequent resettlement in the United States; the shift from a semi-nomadic farming group-oriented life style to modern America; the lack of understanding of our culture, and the lack of English skills. (Smith 1992: 42)

However, the problem faced by the Laotian born Hmong immigrants is much deeper than the adjustment to lifestyle and to a new language skill. To begin with the Hmong population lived in a pre-literate society prior to their migration to the United States and they had no experience or understanding of western culture. A former Hmong community leader says that: "For most Hmong, they are literally jumping a few centuries to catch up with the life in the United States, because they came from a place where there is no electricity and running water. Of course, don't even mention about having a formal education" (Thao:1998).
Takaki found that language is not the only severe problem that the HMong are facing. Takaki notes:

But adjustment is not merely a matter of language. "When you pull a plant out of the ground without any soil around its roots -- soil from where it was grown -- and transplant it, the plant will have trouble surviving," explained Dang Moua, who became a hog farmer in California. "The Hmong never really thought about coming to America, never really believed they would have to leave Asia. Then suddenly we were here.... The technology and the Latin language of European or Mexican immigrants are much closer to America's. They have some dirt on their roots." (Takaki 1989:464)

Without sufficient knowledge about the HMong, the U.S. government designed a "one size fits all" policy. This policy was administered through a program called I-RAP or Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program.

Three federal departments have major responsibilities for refugee resettlement in the United States: the Department of State, Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services (Holman 1996:18). I-RAP is one of the programs within ORR and provides "domestic assistance and services for the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laos refugees...." (Holman 1996:11). Unfortunately, the HMong people were classified as "Laos refugees" initially by I-RAP service providers. In fact, as a particular ethnic group from a pre-literate society, the HMong should have had a different classification.

The HMong did not fully benefit from I-RAP activity. For example, one of I-RAP's activities was that it "published a newspaper, New Life, about life in America, and distributed it to refugees, in separate Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian editions" (Holman 1996:11). Since many HMong were illiterate they could not benefit from this service. However, I-RAP did not have a program exclusively for assisting the refugees
from a pre-literate society. Rather I-RAP treated the Hmong as though they were Laotian during the process of helping them to resettle in the U.S.

In addition, the ESL (English as a second language) teachers in the Eureka Adult School categorized the Hmong as “Vietnamese.” In fact, the Vietnamese and the Hmong speak different languages and came from different social backgrounds. Research shows that almost 50 percent of the Vietnamese refugees attended schools before they came to the U.S. (Montero 1979:84). The Hmong, on the other hand had no formal education, so they "had little or no experience with written forms of their language" (Health 1996:165).

Montero also discovered that "many of the Vietnamese refugees were familiar with American culture and language prior to their departure. Even before the Americans arrived in Vietnam, Western culture was known to many Vietnamese because of the French presence between 1883 and 1946" (1979:84). One century of French colonisation and two decades of American involvement in Vietnam had established a "pre-existing capacity" for the Vietnamese to adapt to American culture.

Research has shown that refugees in general, other than the Hmong, have a relatively high standard of education. According to David Haines:

The federal government's major effort to look at other refugee groups also found relatively high educational levels for Afghans, Ethiopians, Poles, and Romanians. ... Research on later groups of refugees has shown some decline in these relatively high occupational and educational levels. ... One is the presence in later refugee flows, particularly those from [mainland] Southeast Asia, of special populations whose background is rural, (e.g., highland Lao groups such as the Hmong, rural refugees escaping from Cambodia) or who have been systematically excluded from educational and occupational opportunities in their home countries. (1996: 30)

Therefore, the unique social background of the Hmong population negatively influences their adjustment to the host country. Without basic education and relevant vocational
skills from their country of origin, the HMong population encounters unique difficulties as they try to adjust to life in U.S. society. The reason is that the HMong lacked the pre-existing capacity to adapt to Western culture. Overall, identifying the HMong as segments of other ethnic groups creates greater barriers for the HMong to overcome in their attempts to adapt to life in America.

Additionally, many senior HMong refugees must confront different ways of doing things, such as grocery shopping. In their homeland, there is no equivalent to a grocery store. In traditional HMong society they grow their own vegetables and raise domestic beasts for their food. Many adult interviewees feel that their cultural norms and beliefs, their philosophy of life, and even their future hope is, at best, uncertain. This leads directly to the difficulty of HMong failure in the U.S. assimilation plan.

According to Shirley Health:

[The HMong] had considerably less experience in urban setting; and are often unfamiliar with institutions such as the school, factory, public hospital, and employment office. (1996:165)

Thus, the unique circumstances of the HMong refugee population required the aid of a specially tailored assimilation program. Such a program would have to address the pre-literate, agrarian, and isolated nature of HMong culture and society. Ignoring these unique HMong characteristics and placing them in the same category as Laotian and Vietnamese refugees led, inevitably, to the special difficulties and failure of HMong adaptation to life in America.

In sum, the HMong are not adequately assimilated into life in America. This study suggests that misinterpretation in identifying salient characteristics of the HMong in the Eureka area derived from the misperception of the policymakers in classifying the HMong as Vietnamese or Laotian. This misclassifying results in two major obstacles in
the adjustment of their life to life in the United States. The obstacles of concern to the Hmong refugees are those that threaten the integrity of H Mong traditional family life.

Specifically, these areas of primary concern that I found in my interviews revolve around their religious beliefs, cultural values and family values. Anti-traditional attitudes toward animistic religious beliefs among the non-Laotian born younger generation weakened the family-based H Mong traditional society. Non-Laotian born H Mong-Americans are becoming more Americanized, and their departure from the traditional cultural practices in many ways generates the intergenerational tension. These two major differences between the generations created disharmony in the families I studied, which contributed to the erosion of traditional family values among younger generation. These differences result in H Mong adults' orientation toward life in the United States to be much more negative than their children's.

Because this research consisted of a small sample in two rural communities, in Northern California, I recognize its limitation. It would be interesting and important to have further studies done on the H Mong people who live in other rural areas of the United States.
References


Diamond, Norma. Defining the Miao. Ming, Qing, and Contemporany Views. (pp. 92-116).


Appendix 1

Questionnaires for Interviewing Hmong Parents

Number ___________  Sex: Male ____  Female ____  Age ____  Date:______

Blue Hmong ____  White Hmong____  Time:_______________

Linguistic Background:

1.  Do you speak English?  Yes ___  No ___

2a. If no, are you learning English?  Yes ___ (# 2b)  
   No ___
2b. If yes, do you enjoy learning English?  Yes ___  
   No ___

3. Why or why not?

4. Do you know how to read and write these following languages?
   English ____ (1)  
   Hmong ____ (2)  
   French ____ (3)  
   Laotian ____ (4)  
   Thai ____ (5)  
   Other Language ____ (6)  
   (What other language? ____)(7)  

   No, I can't read and write any of those languages. Yet I can speak 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Religious value:

5.  What is your religion? _______________________  I don't know. _________

6. What are the practices of your religion?

7. Could you tell me more about your religion?

8. Did you convert to another religion after you immigrated to the U.S.?  Yes ___  
   No ___

9. Do you believe in afterlife?  Yes ___(# 10)  
   No ___
10. Could you tell me more about afterlife?

Family Value:

11. Do you want your sons or daughters to marry only the H'Mong?
   Yes ___
   No ___

   Explain:

12. Would you oppose your children marrying members of other ethnic groups?
   Yes ___ (# 14)
   No ___ (#13)

   Explain:

13. If no, which member of other ethnic group you would prefer most for your son or daughter to marry?

   (a) African-Americans ___
   (b). Chinese- American ___
   (c). European-American ___
   (d). Japanese- American ___
   (e). Latino ___
   (f). Vietnamese- American ___
   (g). Native-American ___
   (h). Other Asians ___
   (i). Others _________
   (j). All of the above ___
   (k). None of the above ___

14. In your culture, usually, how old are people when they get marry?
   Male: __________________
   Female:__________________

15. Do you agree with traditional early marriage, which means that people get married at an age under 18?
   Yes ___ (# 16)
   No ___ (# 17)

16. Why do you agree with early marriage?

17. Why do you disagree?
18a. Do you have any relative in your homeland? Yes ___ No ___

18b. Do you keep in touch with your relatives in your homeland?
   Yes ___ No ___
   If yes, how frequently? ________________

19. Do you keep in touch with your relatives here in the States?
   Yes ___
   No ___
   If yes, how frequently? ____________

20. Please tell me more about the visits with your relatives.
    (What did you and your relatives usually do when you were together?)

21. Do you also visit your relatives, too?
    Yes ___
    No ___

    If yes, how frequently? __________________________

Measure peer association:

22. Do you have any friend who is HMong? Yes ___ (# 23) No ___ (# 25)

23. If yes, how many HMong friends do you have? ______

24. Could you tell me more about your HMong friends?

25. Do you have any friends who is Caucasian (White)? Yes ___ (# 26) No ___ (# 28)

26. If yes, how many Caucasian (white) friends do you have? ______

27. Could you tell me something about your Caucasian (white) friends?

28. Who are your best friends? Explain more about your best friends.

Intergenerational Relations:

29. How many children do you have? ______

30. How do you feel about people who have large families?
31. What would you like your children to know most about the HMong culture?

32. Did you find any differences in your children's behaviour after they enrolled in school?
   Yes __   
   No __
   Explain:

33. Do your children speak English at home? Yes _____  At what age? ______
   No _____

34. Are you currently learning English? Yes ___
   No ___

35. If yes, do your children criticise you or do they help you when you try to learn English at home?
   My children usually criticised me. _____   My children usually help me. _____
   Explain:

36. What is the greatest difficulty / or satisfaction that you face with your children?
   Difficulty:
   Satisfaction:

37. What do you expect your children to value the most about the HMong culture?

38. Are there any serious problems that you are facing in this country, and if so, what are they?

39. Are there any problems that your children are facing in this country, and if so, what are they?

40. When did you immigrate to this country? I immigrated here in: __________.

41. Did any relatives come with you to this country at the same time? Yes ___ (# 38)
   No ____ (# 39)

42. How many of your relatives came with you at the same time to the United States? ___
   Please list these members of your family and their current age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family members</th>
<th>Their Current Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Grandfather</td>
<td>1. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grandmother</td>
<td>2. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Father</td>
<td>3. ___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Mother __
5. Older sister(s) __
6. Younger sister(s) __
7. Older brother(s) __
8. Younger brother(s) __
9. Uncle(s) __
10. Aunt(s) __
11. Cousin(s) __
12. In-law(s) __
13. Wife __
14. Daughter(s) __
15. Son(s) __

Do not remember precisely. __

43. Do you have plans to go back to your homeland?
   Yes __
   No __
   Explain:

44. If you have the opportunity to do so, would you like to go back to your homeland?
   Yes __
   No __
   Explain:

Measure the level of assimilation/socialization:

45. What do you admire most about the United States?

46. What impression do you have about the US. culture?

   Explain:

47. Which part of the US. culture you think is positive for your children?

48. Which part of the US. culture you think is negative for your children?

49. What is your dream?

50. Is there anything else that is important about your culture/family that you would like to share?

51. Could you introduce me to one of your relatives whom I could interview?
   Yes ____  No ____  Name __________  Phone __________
Information for further contact

52a. Did you ever go to school?
   Yes ___
   No ___

52b. If yes, where is it?
   It is in Laos. ___
   Thailand. ___
   U.S. A. ___
   Others ________

52c. Indicate your level of education:

   1. Less than High School  1. ___
   2. Some High School      2. ___
   3. High School graduate  3. ___
   4. Some College          4. ___
   5. College BA or BS      5. ___
   6. Postgraduate College  6. ___
   7. Advanced Degree       7. ___

53a. Do you have a job? Yes ___   No ___

53b. If yes, what kind of job do you have? _________________
   Full-time ___
   Part-time ___

Thank you very much for your participation in this project.
Appendix 2

Questionnaires for Interviewing Hmong Teenage Children

Number: ___________________  Date: ___________  Time: ___________

Your age: _____ Male _____ Female _____  White ____ Blue ___

Linguistic Background:

1. Which language do you feel comfortable to speak?
   English ____
   H'Mong ____
   Laotian ____
   French ____
   Other language ______________

2. What other languages do you speak? ______________________

3. What language do you prefer to speak at home?

Religious value:

4. What is your religion? _________________________  I don't know. ____ (# 7)

5. Did you convert to another religion?
   Yes ____  No ____
   Explain:

6. What are the practices of your religion?

7. Do you believe in after-life?
   Yes ____  No ____  Not sure ___

8. Will you worship your ancestors' souls after they passed away?
   Yes ____  No ____  Not sure ___
9. Do you know what your parents value most in their traditional beliefs?

**Family Value:**

10. If you wished, would you marry a member of another ethnicity?

   Yes ___    No ___

   Explain:

11. Which member of the following ethnic groups you would prefer to marry?

   (a). African-American ___
   (b). Chinese ___
   (c). European- American ___
   (d). Japanese ___
   (e). Latino ___
   (f). Native-American ___
   (g). Other Asian-American ___
   (h). Vietnamese ___
   (i). None of the above ___
   (j). Others ___
   (k). all of the above ___

12. Do you have any brothers and sisters?

   Yes ___   No ___

13. Number of siblings:

   Older Brothers ____________
   Younger Brothers __________
   Older Sisters ______________
   Younger Sisters ____________

14. Do your parents treat you and your siblings equally?

   Yes ___   No ___

   If yes, how do you cope with this unequal situation?
   Please explain why equal / unequal situation?
15. Do you like to hear your parents talk about traditional values?
   Yes ___    No ___

16. Explain what you like or dislike about your parents traditional values:

17. Do you find any different between your culture and American culture?
   Yes ___    No ___
   If yes, what are they?

18. How do you cope with the differences between traditional values of your family and American values?

19. Do you plan to support your parents when you are able to do so?
   Yes ___    No ___
   Explain:

20. How do you feel about a large family?

21. What do you want to be in the future, i.e. what career have you chosen?

22. What is your parents’ expectation of your future career?

23. How do you cope with the differences between your expectation and your parents expectation for your future, if any?

24. Do member of your culture practice traditional early marriage which means that they get married at an age under 18?
   Yes ___    No ___

25. Do you agree with traditional early marriage?
   Yes ___    No ___
   Explain:
26. What part of your culture you think that is the most important part to the HMong people?

**Measure peer association:**

27. Do you have any friend who is Caucasian (white)? Yes ___  No ___

28. If yes, how many? ______
   Please tell me something about your Caucasian friends.

29. Do you have any HMong friend? Yes ___  No ___

30. If yes, how many HMong friends do you have? ______
   Please tell me something about your HMong friends.

31. Which part of your culture do you appreciate most?
32. Which part of your culture do you like least?

**Intergenerational Relations**

33. Do you find any difficulty communicating with your parents?
   Yes ___  No ___
   Explain with examples, please.

34. What is the greatest difficulty / or satisfaction that you face with your parents?
   Satisfaction:
   Difficulty:

35a. Do you help your parents to learn English?
   Yes ___  No ___

35b. Do you enjoy helping them?
   Yes ___  No ___
36. Are there any serious problems that your parents are facing here?  
   Yes ___ No ___  
   If yes, what are they?

37. Are there any serious problems that you are facing?  
   Yes ___ No ___  
   If yes, what are they?

The level of assimilation / socialisation:

38. Were you born in this country?  
   Yes ___ No ___  
   If no, when did you come to this country? I came here in: ________________

39. How many family members did you come with at the same time? ________________

   Please list these family members and their current age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>Their Current Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Grandfather ___</td>
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<td>2. Grandmother ___</td>
<td>2. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Father ______</td>
<td>3. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mother ______</td>
<td>4. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Older Sister (s)</td>
<td>5. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Younger sister (s)</td>
<td>6. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Older brother (s)</td>
<td>7. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Younger brother (s)</td>
<td>8. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Uncle (s) ______</td>
<td>9. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Aunt (s) _____</td>
<td>10. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Cousin (s) _____</td>
<td>11. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. In-law (s) ____</td>
<td>12. ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not remember precisely. ____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40. What impression do you have about the U. S. culture?  
   Explain:
41. Do you identify yourself as a Hmong, or as an American, or as a Hmong-American? Explain:

42. Have you ever been back to the homeland which your parents came from?
   Yes ____   No ____

43. If you had chance, would you like to go back to your homeland?
   Yes ____   No ____
   Explain:

44. Do you have any friends back in your homeland?   Yes ____   No ____

45. What is your dream?

46a. Did you try to adjust your life between Hmong values and American values?
    Yes ____   No ____

47. In general, how do you adjust your life between Hmong values and American values?

48. What is the most stressful thing to you being a Hmong in this country?

49. Is there anything that is important about you or your family that you would like to share?

50. Are you in school now?   Yes ____   No ____
    If no, did you ever go to school?   Yes ____   No ____
    If no, have you quit school?   Yes ____   No ____

51. Please, indicate your level of education.

1. Some Elementary school 1. __
2. Elementary School graduate 2. __
3. Some High School 3. __
4. High School graduate 4. __
5. Some College 5. __
6. College BA or BS 6. __
52. Do you have a job? Yes ___ No ___

53. What kind of job do you have?
   Part-time job ____
   Full-time job ____

Thank you very much for your participating in this project.
Appendix 3

HMong Minority in Eureka:  
A Study of Adjustment to Life in the United States  
Adult Participant Consent Form  
YuFong Grace Chai, Humboldt State University  
Department of Sociology

The purpose of this project is to study parents' and children's experiences in Humboldt County among the HMong. This study uses a personal interview to collect data among HMong families. In this consent form I am asking you to spend about 1 hours answering my interview questions. If you agree to participate please keep in mind that you are free to quit at any time. In this interview I ask questions regarding values and experiences having to do with culture, family, language, religion, marriage and friendship.

The interview will be in English. I make sure that you clearly understand all the procedures and that you can stop the interview at any time. I will ask about 50 questions and you can also skip any questions you do not want to answer.

In doing this study I hope to learn about some of the differences in experience of HMong parents and HMong children in Humboldt county. There is a slight risk that asking these interview questions will raise anxiety or tension between family members - if this should happen I have arranged for a counsellor to be available for your family at Davis House, Humboldt State University Counselling Centre for you to be able to contact HMong community leader to obtain assistance. The benefits which may result from this study are that both younger and older HMong and other members of society may better understand some of the differences in experience and attitude among HMong generations today.

There is no compensation for participation in this study, and I will not earn any money for doing this work. All of the information I gather is strictly confidential - I do not want to receive sensitive information and I will only use this interview material for the purpose of social science analysis. I will take notes when I interview teenagers and I will not keep the notes with the consent forms or with any other identifying information. I would like to answer any questions you have about this study. Do you have any?

If you agree to the participation in this interview please sign below:

Participant Signature: X____________________________________ Date: ________

Because I do not speak HMong I would like to tape-record this interview. If this is alright with you please initial below. If this makes you uncomfortable in any way then I will not use the tape recorder.
Initial here if it is alright to use a tape recorder: X__________
Appendix 4

HMong Minority in Eureka:
A Study of Adjustment to Life in the United States
Parental/Teenage Consent Form - Interview Agreement
YuFong Grace Chai, Humboldt State University
Department of Sociology

The purpose of this project is to study parents' and children's experiences in Humboldt County among the HMong. This study uses a personal interview to collect data among HMong families. In this consent form I am asking parents or guardians and participating teenagers to give permission for me to spend 1-1.5 hours interviewing the teenage member of the household listed below. I will, of course, not attempt to interview this individual unless he/she also agrees, and participants are free to quit at any time they want. The interview will be in English language. In this interview I ask about 50 questions regarding values and experiences having to do with culture, family, language, religion, marriage and friendship.

If you agree to this study the interview will take place in your home or a place of your suggestion. I will carry out the interview now or at a time of your selection. In doing this study I hope to learn about some of the differences in experience of HMong parents and HMong children in Humboldt county. There is a slight risk that asking these interview questions will raise anxiety or tension between family members - if this should happen I have arranged for a counsellor at Davis House (707-826-3921) to be available for your family at the Humboldt State University Counselling Centre or for you to be able to contact Yer Thao, HMong community leader, to obtain assistance. The benefits which may result from this study are that both younger and older HMong and other members of society may better understand some of the differences in experience and attitude among HMong generations today. You and your family member can access to the result of my research through Yer Thao or in Humboldt Room of the library at Humboldt State University.

There is no compensation for participation in this study, and I will not earn any money for doing this work. All of the information I gather is strictly confidential - I do not want to receive sensitive information and I will only use this interview material for the purpose of social science analysis. I will take notes when I interview teenagers and I will not keep the notes with the consent forms or with any other identifying information. If the teenage approve my use of a tape recorder I will not put his/her name on the tape and I will transcribe the tape within 2 weeks and immediately destroy the tape. I would like to answer any questions you have about this study. Do you have any? To Parents/ Guardian: If you agree to the participation of the teenager listed below please sign:

Parent / Guardian Signatures: X_________________________ Date: ______

To Minor Participant: If you agree to participate in this interview research I will ask about 50 questions and you can skip any questions you do not want to answer or stop the interview at any time. If you agree to participate please sign below:

Minor Participant Signature: X_________________________ Date: ______

Minor Participant Name (printed): __________________________

If it is OK to tape recorder, please initial: ____________