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Lo, Xiong A.
Hmong high school students' attitudes and
aspirations toward education. 1998.

SUBMISSION OF FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

University of Wisconsin-Stout
The Graduate College

The accompanying research report was submitted to the Graduate College, University of Wisconsin-Stout, as partial completion of the requirements for the degree M.S./Ed.S. (Circle one) in Guidance and Counseling K-12

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HMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES
AND
ASPIRATIONS TOWARD EDUCATION

by

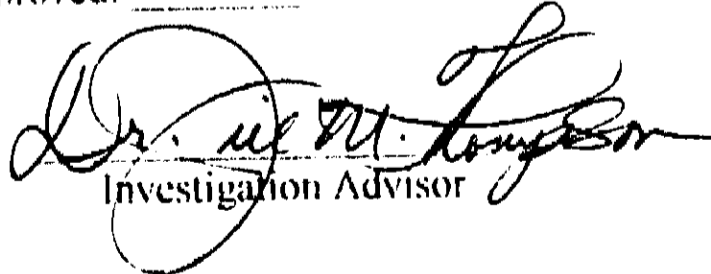
Xiong A. Lo

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the
Master of Science Degree

Guidance and Counseling K-12

Approved: 2 Semester Credits


Investigation Advisor

The Graduate College
University of Wisconsin-Stout
August, 1998

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ABSTRACT

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<u>Hmong High School Students' Attitudes and Aspirations Toward Education</u> (Title)			
<u>Guidance and Counseling</u> (Graduate Major)	Dr. Jill M. Thompson (Research Advisor)	(Month/Year)	34 (No. Of Pages)
<u>American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual</u> (Name of Style Manuel Used in this Study)			

This study of Hmong high school students' attitudes toward high school graduation as well as their aspirations for higher education at the post-secondary level was conducted to determine what, if any, differences exist between gender, academic classifications, soci-economic, duration of staying in America and academic achievement in regards to self-reported attitudes and aspirations. Sixty (60) of Hmong high school students were selected from Wausau West High School in Wausau, Wisconsin. The instrument used was the researcher self-designed attitudinal questionnaire with consultations of professors and final approval from the Research Center at University Wisconsin Stout. The study offers suggestions for the implementation of educational planning, policy and practice in dealing with Hmong students, and explores possible directions for future research.

Acknowledgment

Throughout my graduate work I have received much inspiration from professors, colleagues, friends and family members. In the course of designing and pursuing this study I also indebted to many people in the University of Wisconsin Stout and city of Wausau. First of all, I am deeply grateful to Dr. Jill Thompson (Thesis Advisor) for her tireless efforts in providing all supports and contributions to make this study possible and successful. I also would like to recognize contributions of the following people: Gary Rockwood, Frank Thomas, and Dr. Mary Hopkins-Best.

The researcher wishes to acknowledge Dr. Henson, Dr. Bryan Hendrick and Xiong C. Lor for contributing their times, energies and wisdom to help analyzing data. I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to: Hmong students for their voluntary participation, and the Wausau School District for all its assistance.

And finally, to my wife and younger brother, Taosia Lo, who endured with me, I am most humbly grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Even though the Hmong people have always valued education as very important, in Laos, they had a few or limited opportunities to go to school. The majority of the Hmong people either had very limited education or never had any formal education at all. However, Vang (1992) had stated that the success of the Hmong life in America would be depended on how the Hmong parents can provide supports for their children in successfully accomplishing American education. He then went further to state that children are the key of the Hmong's future in America. Cohn's (1986) statement also supported this premise.

"in a very short time education has come to be tremendously valued by Hmong in the United States. Many Hmong who have given up hopes of rebuilding their own lives pin their hopes for the future of the Hmong in America on the education of their children."

Today's education in America is changing at a very rapid pace and it is having a tremendous impact on students. Therefore, students who desire to have a successful education will need more mental skill and less manual skill. Many studies have indicated that students who possess a strong positive attitude toward their career have higher aspiration in pursuing their career.

According to Horn (1984), the chief ingredient to success in any life setting such as business or education is a clear vision of the future. The future cannot be predicted with any degree of accuracy; but the present conditions and events are all good indicators of what the future holds. If one must function successfully and effectively in

today's society, one must continue to grow within an educational system or be prepared to fight. The education of yesterday cannot adequately meet the challenges of today's society.

In order for Hmong children to meet the challenges of today's world of work in America, they must learn and accept the challenges of the American educational systems. Many of Hmong children are getting first hand experience in school only at American schools. Therefore, many Hmong students have been frustrated in schools. On the other hand, some Hmong children are excited and anxious in learning from their friends, teachers, and experiences that necessary skills that are required for completing their educational dreams. As a result of these experience, these students develop certain types of behaviors, and attitudes toward their learning experiences. According to, Kermant (1979), the attitudes that students develop or adopt will certainly affect their learning in some measurable way.

Successful schooling must not only be measured by quality of teaching methods, good curriculum, and academic supportive services, but also by students' learned behavior. Students' success is the ultimate goal of any school system, but success is determined to a great degree by students' attitudes toward specific learning tasks (Favaro, 1995).

It is the intention of this descriptive study to identify the attitudes and aspirations of Hmong high school students toward high school graduation as well as pursuing college education.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the attitudes of Hmong high

school students toward high school graduation as well as their aspiration for higher education at the post-secondary level.

The research was conducted in July of 1998. A self-designed questionnaire was given to sixty Hmong high school students at the Wausau West High School. The participants have been in the school system for more than three years. Hmong high students at Wausau West High School were randomly selected, and asked to voluntarily to participate in this study. The proportional stratified sampling was used to make sure that male and female had a good representation.

Statement of the Hypothesis

The research evidence suggests that the Hmong students may or may not be experiencing greater levels of positive attitudes toward education than their average fellow classmates. Therefore, the hypotheses for this study are as follows:

1. There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students' attitudes and aspirations as relate to gender.
2. There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students' attitudes and aspirations as relate to socio-economic.
3. There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students' attitudes and aspirations as relate to duration of staying in America.
4. There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students' attitudes and aspirations as relate to academic achievements.
5. There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students' attitudes and aspirations as relate to academic classifications.

Definition of Terms

Attitude: Attitude is difficult to define. For the purpose of this study, attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which is related (All, 1935).

Higher Education: Higher education is an education beyond the secondary level which provide by a college or university (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1975). Within this study, terms such post-secondary, college, and university will be used interchangeably.

Refugee: It is difficult for many people to understand the concepts of refugee and immigrant. For this research, refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (United States Refugee Act of 1980).

Aspiration: Aspiration is a strong desire to achieve some thing high or great (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1975).

Duration: For this study, duration means the length of continuing in time.

Gender: Gender in this study is defined as male and female students.

Socio-economic: Socio-economic is broadly defined in the combination of social and economic factors (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1975). But for the purpose of this study, the definition of socioeconomic is defined as working and non-working factors.

Hmong People: In this study, Hmong people is a group of people who have lived in the mountain of Laos, and migrated to the United States as refugees. Hmong people have known for their rich culture, strong work ethic, independence and freedom (Yang, 1981).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Since the researcher found no relating studies pertaining to the present study, the literature review contained information concerning Hmong people in the areas of education, culture, and history.

Historical Background:

Since 1975, thousands of Hmong refugees have fled their homes from Laos and searched for freedom and safety. A large numbers of Hmong refugees chose the United States since the United States was their allies in their fight against the communist oppression. Therefore, the United States was an ideal and logical nation whereby Hmong people could attempt to rebuild their new lives (Yang, 1993).

Hmong people were a preliterate Southeast Asian tribe with origins in southwest China. The Hmong were a group of people who have lived in the mountain of Laos and throughout Southeast Asia, Southern and Western China. They have been known for their strong work ethic, independence, and love of freedom. They have been known as the "Meo" or "Maio" which pejoratively meant "Barbarian" or "Primitive," but they have called themselves "Hmong" which means "Free people". Generally, the name of "Meo or "Maio" was a name which the Hmong did not accept (Yang, 1981).

The highest or largest Hmong concentration in Southeast Asia was in Laos. They lived in relative isolation in small autonomous villages scattered through remote mountain valleys and ridges in the Lao highlands. In Laos, Hmong people practiced sweden agriculture, growing rice, corn, and other crops. The Hmong did not have a written language until Christian missionaries came to Laos and developed an alphabet for

them in the early 1950s. Until then their communications had been strictly oral (Refugees in Ramsey County, 1984, and the Hmong Resettlement Study, 1985).

Even though the Hmong society was an illiterate society, the culture and customs were orally passed from one generation to another generation. The two primary units of the Hmong social organization were the family and the clan. The Hmong family was a patrilineally extended family which usually consisted of a husband, wife, their children and grand parents. Traditionally, the Hmong preferred to have many children, preferably boys. The sons were bound by custom to take care of their parents when they were old or could not take care of themselves. Additionally, sons were customarily expected to carry the name of the family. Therefore, they were more treasureable to the Hmong society (Biatout, 1982). Furthermore, the clans ties followed paternity lines with extended family relationships considered very vital. Each clan was decided by their many lineages. Membership in the lineage group depended upon the ability to track back to a common ancestor. The majority of the Hmong people preferred to live with, or near family members for mutual respect and assistance (Lee, 1986). In the Hmong society, it was taboo to marry in one's own clan. In other words, to marry within one's clan was strictly forbidden (Bliatout, 1982).

Turning aside from the friendly confines and comforts of marriage, the young Hmong man soon found his male attribute to be most fitting for fighting, and/or for the less amible venture of warfare. During the 1906's to 1970's the Hmong were heavily recruited by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to fight rebel forces in Indochina. As the result of the Vietnam War, the Hmong suffered great casualties. "In

the proportion to their population, their war casualties were ten times higher than the American who fought in Vietnam" (Cerquone, 1986). Losing to the communists in 1975, Hmong were forced to flee from their homeland, Laos. Unfortunately, more than 170,000 of the Hmong refugees fled to Thailand and then later to the third countries around the world, mostly to the United States (Yang, 1981).

Hmong In The United States:

The United States has the largest concentration of Hmong refugees compared to other nations. According to Yang, there are about 300,000 Hmong people in this country (French National Assembly, 1997). The Hmong population has been a rapidly growing population, especially of younger people (Cohn, 1996).

According to Goldstein (1985), Hmong people left Laos due to actual or anticipated persecution at the hands of the communist government. They did not leave Laos in quest of the Golden land they fled for their lives. Because they were forced out of their homeland, it truly was a significant and vital factor in understanding the nature of their adjustment to this country. In order to have a better understanding of the Hmong resettlement, it is important to examine the definition of the term refugee. Refugees were involuntary migrants who often had satisfactory lives at home yet had commitment to the old society. As a result, refugees have strongly resisted assimilative pressures. For this practice, refugees have attempted to re-establish their old lives in America. They also often "cling to the hope that they some days will be able to return home within their lifetimes" (Stein, 1979 and Thompson 1983).

The adaptation to a new culture or new ways of life has been more difficult for the Hmong than other refugee groups, because of the vast dissimilarities in language, culture,

family structure, educational disadvantages, and nontransferable vocational skills. These reasons have contributed greatly to their difficulties in social , language, culture, family structure, educational disadvantages, and nontransferable vocational skills. These reasons have contributed greatly to their difficulties in social adjustment and finding good employment to support a large family members. A large numbers of the Hmong families have been working on the lower paid jobs. A large segment of the population could not speak or learn English. Inability to learn the basic survival skills such as speak English has been a major obstacle for the Hmong in the United States (Lo, 1998). The community agencies, schools, churches, and fellow citizens have tried to provide help for the Hmong to rebuild their lives in America. It has been very difficult for the older men and women to learn the language and culture to assimilate with the mainstream society (Refugees in Ramsey County, 1984).

Educational Background:

Historically, the majority of the Hmong people did not have a formal education. Prior to 1885, the only formal education available in Laos was that found in the Buddhist temples (Berval, 1959). During this time, the Laotian education was available only to the limited numbers of males. Due to differences in religious beliefs between the Hmong and Lao, the Hmong children were not allowed to attend schools in the temples. The majority of the Laotian people believed in Buddhism. The Hmong believed in ancestor worship and animism. Another reason Hmong children did not have an education due to the lack of schooling in the locations that Hmong lived. Only small percentage of the Hmong children had assessed to education (Moua, 1998).

Under French domination, starting around the middle of the nineteenth century, secular school began to grow and eventually predominate (Robert, 1966). Due to the limitations of the educational resources, such as lack of teachers, buildings, school materials and supplies, therefore, education was available to only small numbers of people, mainly the rich people.

It was until 1939, the first village school for the Hmong children was established in Nong Het, Xieng Khouang Province, an area inhabited largely by the Hmong. This school offered a beginning class and involved with limited students. According to Yang (1989), prior to this formal schooling, a few of the Hmong young people had gone to Vinh, in Central Vietnam, to receive a formal education.

After World War II, many Hmong leaders had put pressure on the Laotian Government and Laotian Department of Education, then the schools started to slowly expand to other Hmong inhabited villages, especially the Xieng Khouang province where it contained the most of the Hmong population. Due to the increased availability of school systems for Hmong children, the numbers of the Hmong children in formal education had increased dramatically in the schools. The Hmong students began to move from their traditional school of nature to an academic school system (Lor, 1994)

The number of the Hmong students had continued to increase until the takeover of the Laotian communist regime in 1975. In schools, the Hmong students learned the Laotian alphabet and their language. It took several years for the Hmong students to learn to speak and write Laotian because the Laotian language was a second language for the Hmong. However, in Laos, high schools and colleges offered only in the big cities, far away from Hmong villages. For this reason, only a very small numbers of the Hmong

children were able to receive an education beyond elementary level (Yang, 1989).

Hmong Children in American Education:

In America, every Hmong child who is under the age of eighteen is mandated to go to school. This opportunity is the first time in the Hmong history (Lor, 1995). Many researchers have indicated that the Hmong children who came to this country at a younger age and those who were born in this country have learned and used English very well. They had done very well in schools and faced no special problems. But those students who arrived in the country of an older age have found it unpleasant in schools because they spoke less fluent English than their younger siblings. For instance, while they might do well in math, but they have found it very difficult to demonstrate their work to the rest of their classmates. Many of these students have little or no previous formal education in the homeland or in the refugee camps. This made school even harder for the Hmong students than other refugee students such as the vietnamese (Cohn, 1986). Many studies on the Hmong resettlement issues also found be consisting with Mr. Cohn (The Hmong Resettlement Studies, 1984).

School officials have expressed a great concern toward Hmong students, especially at the middle and high school levels. Those concerns are ranging from early marriage, school dropout, absenteeism, lack of motivation, etc... In the early 1980s, a study was completed at the St. Paul Public Schools. This study indicated that as many as 80% of the Hmong high school students in the city were married. The researcher estimated that the rate of the Hmong girls dropping out of schools before graduating was 90% (The Hmong Resettlement Study, 1984). Nationwide at least 50% dropout rate

among Hmong girls has been reported (Cohn, 1986).

Number of researchers also went further to study other educational concerns in preventing Hmong students from achieving their education. One of the major problems that indicated in the finding was that Hmong students have lacked adequate role models in that parents and older siblings had little or no education. According to the Hmong school aides and School social workers, most of the Hmong students who were likely to dropout of school came from families with the least educated parents and were most unfamiliar with the American school systems. A refugee resettlement study at Orange County, California also supported the cited finding by pointing out that Hmong students lacked of guidance or direction in schools. This obstacle has contributed to academic problems for Hmong students and promoted greater frustration and increased school dropouts (The Hmong Resettlement Study, 1986). Lynn Stangelo, Director of the School To Work Program at Wausau School District, reported that the dropout and delinquent rates of the Hmong high school students have been continuing to increase every year (Stangelo, 1998). Another study was conducted in the St. Paul Public School by Miss Hang. The finding of this study supported the couple of previous studies that the Hmong students have been experiencing a high rate of school truancy and delinquency (Hang, 1997).

The Hmong students and their teachers agreed that general counseling and career counseling were badly needed because most of the students were unfamiliar with American educational and employment systems. One of the students mentioned that "I need guidance in high school to tell me that education is the most important thing. The problem is we come from a very underdeveloped country. We never saw that there could

be such wonderful things—computers and like that. We need advice in high school so that we know how to make career choices” (The Hmong Resettlement Study, 1984).

A study by the Philadelphia School District in the English As Second Language Department (1988) examined attitudes of Hmong students toward education. This study found that the Hmong youth did display a positive attitude toward education. The Hmong students has indicated that they needed education in order to be successful in America. In contrast, Xiong a counselor at Milwaukee School District (1995) reported many of Hmong high school students have indicated that they were bored and frustrated in their high school classes. Some students have stopped going to school every day. The author also has experienced similar situations and seen the rise of this type of activities. The researcher also found that the graduating rate among boys was significantly higher than girls. For example, one Hmong girl mentioned that “she was concerned with what she will do after high school, the choices being more schooling or job.” She also experienced a concern about the tradition of early marriage (Peters, 1988).

Many highly motivated Hmong high school graduating students have pursued higher education across the country and have seen college education as their main hope for a successful future in America. They have been classified by their professors as hard working students. But the major barriers to higher education which Hmong students have identified were language, finances, and family responsibilities (Lee, 1986). Some of the American higher educational institutes have organized programs to support the Hmong college students. In addition, numbers of Hmong students associations have been organized in campuses to provide social and educational supports for Hmong

students. Not only assist college students, Hmong students organizations have provided information regarding financial aid as well as information regarding college opportunities to Hmong high school students (Downing, 1988). Many researchers in the literature review predicted that Hmong students will increase in higher education as more of the young generation currently in high school graduate.

According to Yang (1997), within a relatively short period of time, the Hmong community has known a success in the realm of education unprecedented in all its previous history: 85 Hmong graduates have earned Doctor's degrees including 17 women, 270 have received master's degrees and approximately 3,000 have earned bachelor's degrees since the first Hmong refugees settled in the United States in 1975. In the study, he also reported that there are about 150 Hmong students are currently working toward their Doctor's degrees in different universities around the country, (Yang, 1997).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to assess the attitude of the Hmong high school students toward their career in education through their answers to research questionnaire. The following description will give information regarding the subjects, instruments, procedures, unknowns, limitations, and data analysis.

Subjects

In July of 1998, Wausau School District was asked for permission to survey the Hmong high school students who have attended summer school. The researcher had made a telephone call to the superintendent and followed with a cover letter to explain the purpose of the study for using the Hmong high school students. Since all the subjects were minors, a letter of consent was mailed to all the participants parents or guardians for permission to participate in the study. The search also made a telephone call to inform the summer school principal before the questionnaire were being distributed to the students. The city of Wausau and its surrounding areas do not have the most Hmong population, but it does have the highest concentration of the Hmong population in the state of Wisconsin. Furthermore, Wisconsin has the third highest Hmong population in the United States. The city of Wausau is located in central Wisconsin. The Wausau School District is one of the school districts in the state of Wisconsin that has the highest Hmong students. The Wausau School District also has been recognized as one of the most progressive school districts in the state. The city has population approximately 37,000 and including surrounding areas about 65,000. The city of Wausau and its greater areas have Hmong refugees approximately 4,500. In general, the Hmong community

and the greater Wausau community have been getting along very good.

Sixty (60) of the Hmong high school students were selected and asked to voluntarily participate in the study. The participants were asked to voluntarily answer a research attitudinal questionnaire. No record was kept regarding age of the participants.

Because this study was descriptive study the subjects were asked to report their attitudes and aspiration toward education without any treatment. The subjects were not aware of the research topic until they received the questionnaire.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a self-designed questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire requested personal data for making comparisons answers drawn were based on multiple choice. The main or second part of the instrument was developed on a five (5) point likert scale format (See Appendix B). The purpose of this instrument was to assess the attitudes of the Hmong high school students toward their high school completion as well as their aspirations for pursuing post-secondary education. The questionnaire was developed to include key issues found in the literature with regard to the study topic. The survey questionnaire was reviewed and consulted by professor Frank Thomas, Gary Rockwood, and Dr. Gerald Davis before submitted to Dr. Dnaus, UW-Stout Research Systems for critique and final approval. Additionally, upon approval the questionnaire was involved pilot tested with five (5) high school students before finalized format and content were completed.

Procedures

After the sample was completely selected at Wausau West High School, a letter was

mailed to the parents for permission to participate in the survey. The teachers in the subjects' class were asked to help distribute, administer and collect the questionnaire. The selected subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire at their free times and return it to the teachers. A cover letter was attached with the questionnaire to explain the purpose of the study and the teachers were asked to help provide additional explanation to the subjects if there is a need about how to complete the survey. Special care was taken during the survey time to make sure that explanation does not provide the subjects with any extra information than what each survey statement meant as to prevent bias. The participants were asked to finish the questionnaire in the classrooms and return it to the teacher at the same day.

Limitations

One of the extraneous variable may be due to the process of administrating the questionnaire. Some teachers will be very conscientious and some will be more lax. Some of the students will be giving more direction how to fill out the questionnaire. Another extraneous variable will lie on the attitudes of students themselves. These attitudes could various from day to day. Language barriers may be another factor.

Results are not generalized for all the Hmong students who live in other places because of the specialty of the locale. Additionally, extraneous variable lies in the educational system itself.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to survey the attitudes of the Hmong high school students toward high school graduation as well as their aspirations for higher education at the post-secondary level. This section explained the data analysis procedures.

1. The demographic data was developed on multiple choice statement; therefore, nominal measurement was used to determine the frequency and percentage of each item of the total group.
2. The attitudinal scales were developed with five (5) points likert scales; therefore, interval measurement was appropriated to measure the scores. Analysis of data was by means of measures of central tendency (mean) and variability (standard deviation). An item by item t-test comparing women respondents to men respondents on item 8-25 was undertaken to determine how great the difference between each group mean must be in order for it to be judged significant that is, a significant departure from difference which might be expected by chance alone. In order to be able to determine the difference between academic classifications, the ONE WAY ANOVA will be used along with mean and standard deviation.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the attitudes of the Hmong high school students toward high school graduation as well as their aspiration for higher education at the post-secondary level. This chapter contained the findings and results of each hypothesis or subjects respond to the designed questionnaire. The statistical findings were reported in five ways: 1) by gender; 2) by soci-economic; 3) by duration of living in America; 4) by grade point average; 5) by academic classifications. A two-way analysis of variance was used to describe the significant deference in the findings.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students in attitudes and aspirations in relate to gender. Thus, there is no statistical significance in attitudes and aspirations between male and female Hmong high school students, and therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Male participants which consisted 56.86% of the sample as compared to female participants which consisted 43.14%. However there was a slight difference when comparing male to female means. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Gender

Gender	Means	Standard Deviation	Total Group
Male	73.069	9.573	29
Female	76.273	6.401	22

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students in attitudes and aspirations in relate to soci-economic. This present study found no significant deference in attitudes and aspirations between Hmong high school students who came from different soci-economic back-ground. Participants who came from unworking group which consisted of 9.80% in comparing to the working group which constituted of 90.20 of the total sample. Even though the finding means were very similar, there was still difficult to make a comparison because the unworking subjects were under representation. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Soci-economic.

Soci-Economic	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total Group
Working Group	74.370	8.497	46
Unworking Group	75.200	8.701	05

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students in attitudes and aspirations in relate to GPA (grade point average). Results of the present study indicated there was a statistical significance in Hmong students who reported low GPA and those who reported high GPA; therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The group representative in the study sample was 6% for students who reported GPA 1.00-2.00, 30% for students who earned GPA of 2.01-3.00 and 64% of subjects reported GPA higher than 3.01. The means between average and high achievers were not significantly different. (See Table)

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Grade Point Average

GPA	Means	Standard Deviation	Total Group
1.00-2.00	66	4	03
2.01-3.00	73.733	9.823	15
3.01-4.00	75.574	7.845	32

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students in attitudes and aspirations in relate duration of living in America. Again, there was not statistical significance in this study in pertaining to the length of living in America; therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. The representation of participants were defined as follow: 15.69% have lived in America between 1-5 years, 27.45% have lived between 6-10 years, 41.18% have lived in the country between 11-15 years and 15.69% have been in the country for more than 16 up years. Comparison means were closed. (See Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Duration in America

Years	Means	Standard Deviation	Total Group
1-5	76.875	5.540	08
6-10	75.929	7.032	12
11-15	73.190	11.016	21
16-Up	72.750	4.400	08

Null Hypothesis 5: There is no statistical significance in Hmong high school students in attitudes and aspirations in relate to academic classifications. Participants were 27.45% freshmen, 25.49% sophomore, 27.45 % junior and 19.61 senior. Based on the self-reported attitudes and aspirations on the questionnaire of this present study, results indicated that there was no statistical difference between participants who were in different grade levels. (See Table 5)

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Academic Classifications

Grade Level	Means	Standard Deviation	Total Group
Freshman	75.857	10.509	14
Sophomore	70.692	8.321	13
Junior	75.571	6.991	14
Senior	75.800	6.713	10

The findings and results of this presentation presented a clear picture Hmong high school students do want to complete their high school education as well as pursuing higher education at the post-secondary level.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine attitudes of Hmong high school students toward high school graduation as well as their aspirations for higher education at the post-secondary level.

Subjects of this study were identified by the participating school building principals and the researcher. The research questionnaire used to measure attitudes and aspirations was designed by the researcher with consultation of professors and thesis advisor. The UW-Stout Research Department Chair, Dr. Knaus, gave the final approval before the questionnaire were used. Furthermore, the questionnaire was administered to randomly selected Hmong high school students of Wausau West High and East High Schools in Wausau, Wisconsin.

A total of 51 questionnaire were completed by 51 Hmong high school students. All answered questionnaire were filled out correctly in the study; therefore, all the completed questionnaire were used in the process of analyzing data. The data entry was done at the UW-Stout's Computer Services, and the data calculation was completed by Dr. Bryan Hendrick at the University of Wisconsin Marathon County, Wausau, Wisconsin.

An independent T-test results indicated that a significant difference was not existed between gender and socio-economic. And the ONE WAY ANOVA results indicated that there are no significant difference in attitudes and aspirations in relation to GPA, academic classifications, and duration of living in America. All means and standard deviations were not significantly different.

Implications

The primary intent of this study was to further the understanding of attitudes and aspirations of Hmong high school students toward their education. One of the findings and results of this current study supports the belief that Hmong high school students take education seriously regardless of gender. One of the questions within the study asked about high school graduation, the female mean was 4.77 and the male mean was 4.66. Therefore, findings suggested that teachers, counselors, administrators, parents and community leaders should not view students according to their sex differences. Another words, both groups of students took and viewed education seriously. The result of this research also placed a challenge to many school districts such as Wausau School District, St. Paul Public School, etc... which have believed that Hmong female students were not valued education. The drop-out and delinquency rates among Hmong high school girls were higher than boys. In addition, another implication drawn from this study was that Hmong students should not be viewed or treated differently in term of soci-economic background. According to the results on soci-economic, Hmong high school students from unworking families had the same inspiration toward their education in comparing to students which came from working class. More specifically for question #16 when asked whether education was linked to economic stability, of the 51 participants on a likert scale of 1-5, the mean for an answer of (yes) was 4.00.

Furthermore, this study also was an attempt to understand Hmong students in term of their school performance in relation to their commitment in education. Based on the findings from the attitudinal questionnaire, Hmong students who did not perform well in school had perceived education unpleasant. These results suggested that teachers,

administrators, and support staff need to develop program or programs to inspire and motivate the said group of students. Another implication from the present study is that there is no significant difference between Hmong high school students in term of duration of staying in America as well as duration of attending high schools. Therefore, Hmong students pursue in educational endeavors cannot be based on length of time living in the United States as well as their duration in schools. Even though American born Hmong high school students hold similar attitudes toward education as their Hmong counterparts that have lived in America for less than 5 years. Based on the mentioned result, educators cannot view students with English as a second language as not desiring high educational attainment. (i.e. Hmong High School Students).

Recommendations

Based on findings and results of the present study, the researcher wishes to offer the following recommendations.

First of all, since Hmong high students indicated strong positive attitudes toward their education, schools need to develop programs to address their needs. Specifically, students indicated in question # 11 which asked about whether they needed guidance, of the 51 subjects the mean for an answer on likert scale was 3.7. Therefore, the researcher recommended administrators, support and teaching staff to address areas of career guidance. Educators need to get Hmong students involve in school to work program, so that they can gain real life work experience. Secondly, the findings indicated that Hmong high school students show high interest and commitment of pursuing college after graduating from high school. An alternative program to help Hmong students explore colleges is strongly recommended. Hmong high school students need the said

program more than their fellow Anglo-friends because their parents have no or limited information in comparing to Anglo-students' parents. Thirdly, Hmong high school students wanted to do well in classes. Therefore, it is important and necessary that administrators and both teaching and support staff hold high expectation for Hmong students.

Not only depending on school programs, parents play very important role in their children education. On question #22 in the study, Hmong high school students reported that the encouragement and support of their parents motivated them to continue their education. Therefore, it is crucial that schools administrators and PTO (parents and teachers organization) develop a program to encourage parent-involvement in school activities. Furthermore, the researcher also wishes to recommend that community based social agencies, especially Hmong organizations, put together programs to help parents learn about the importance of participating in their children education.

However, further studies on Hmong high school students' attitudes and aspirations toward education need to continue and expand into the following recommendations. 1) A study be undertaken using the same items that were identified in the factor analysis as the evaluation instrument and repeat the study with the same schools. 2) A similar study be made at the middle and elementary school levels. 3) A longitudinal study be made in these selected subjects to measure the success of their educational endeavors. 4) Future studies should attempt to use different measures of self-reported attitudes and aspirations. These measures should contain normative data so that the results are more generalizable. 5) Further research should attempt to gather data on large samples of the Hmong student population. 6) Future studies might consider looking at the relationship between

Hmong students self-concept and their attitudinal levels. Results of such an investigation may help to further clarify the psychological state of Hmong students individually.

Conclusions

In Laos, a formal education for the Hmong people was very limited to certain children. Therefore, higher number of Hmong people did not have the opportunity to attend Lao schools. But since the Hmong people arrived in America, Hmong children under the age of 18 years olds are mandated to go to schools. This opportunity is the first time in Hmong history. With a relatively short period of time, Hmong students already have experienced a success in American schools. Several thousand of Hmong young men and women already have received American higher education degrees; and thousands of Hmong children current in the secondary level are preparing their ways into the post-secondary institutions through-out the country.

Findings and results of the present study concluded that Hmong high school students hold positive attitudes toward their education as well as aspirations in pursuing higher education at the post-secondary level. Because of their strong desire and commitment toward education, educators at all levels need to develop programs to address various different needs of Hmong students. Programs may need to focus on academic supports, school environment, career guidance, etc... A successful completion of American schools means social and economic mobility as well as stability for Hmong people in America.

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Questionnaire Form

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE

PART I - DEMOGRAPHICS

Direction: Please mark (x) on the appropriate place.

1. Sex

_____ Male
 _____ Female

2. Marital Status

_____ Single
 _____ Married
 _____ Divorced

3. Who do you live with

_____ Parent (s)
 _____ Others

4. How many years have you lived in this country?

_____ 1-5
 _____ 6-10
 _____ 10-15
 _____ 16- up

5. Does your household work?

_____ Yes
 _____ No

6. Academic classification

_____ Freshman
 _____ Sophomore
 _____ Junior
 _____ Senior

7. My grade point average is

_____ 1.00-2.00
 _____ 2.01-3.00
 _____ 3.00-4.00

PART II - ATTITUDE SCALE

Direction: Please indicate how you see the following statements apply to you from strongly disagree to strongly agree in the 5 points scale. Circle "1" if you strongly disagree with the statement. Circle "2" if you disagree with the statement. Circle "3" if you are undecided about the statement. Circle "4" if you agree with the statement. Circle "5" if you strongly agree with the statement.

- 1- SD - STRONGLY DISAGREE
- 2- D - DISAGREE
- 3- UD - UNDECIDED
- 4- A - AGREE
- 5- SA - STRONGLY AGREE

	SD	D	UD	A	SA
8. Graduating from high school is necessary for me.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I would like to pursue a college education after I graduate from high school.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I should marry before I graduate from high school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. To do well in high school is one of the best ways to prepare for college.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am willing to leave my home to attend college.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Increasing high-tech industry will require more education or training.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel that I can handle and ready for college.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Speaking and writing good English is a key to get a decent job and to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I believe that education is directly link to economic stability.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I enjoy doing my school work.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I need someone to provide me with a guidance and directions for my career exploration.	1	2	3	4	5

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. I understand about the process of getting financial aide to attend college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. By having a college education I will be able to earn a decent living. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I feel that I can afford going to college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. My parents will be proud of me if I go to college | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. My friends will be proud of me if I go to college | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I have the obligation to my family and cousins to go to college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I believe in my future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

If you like to share the results of this study, please write your address below. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Address:

NOTIFIED LETTER

Appendix B

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child has an opportunity to take part in a study about the Attitudes of the Hmong high school students toward high school graduation as well as their aspiration for post-secondary education. The building principal has fully approved this research project. I am asking your permission for your child to be included in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is strictly voluntary and he or she may discontinue his or her participation at any time without prejudice. Participant will be asked to respond to an attitudinal questionnaire. Any collecting information in this study will be held in the strictest confidence. There is no record in this study that will be able to identify your child's participation.

If you have any questions pertaining this study, please call me at (715) 359-2064 or my advisor Dr. Jill Thompson at (715) 232-1343. Please sign the attached form indicating whether or not you have agreed to have your child participate and return it by July 14, 1998.

Sincerely,

Xiong A. Lo

Consent Form

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, do _____ do not _____ (check one)
agree to allow my child, _____, to participate in this study about
"Attitudes of the Hmong high school students toward high school graduation as well as
their aspiration for higher education."

Signature _____ Date _____

MICROFILMS
24:1
STOUT MICROGRAPHICS
LAB