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# SUBMISSION OF FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

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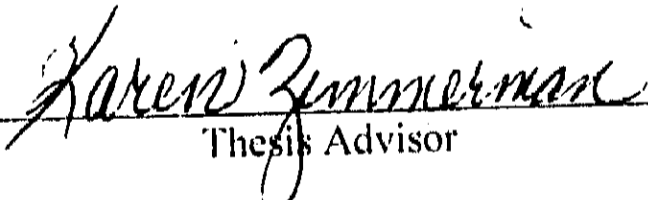
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HMONG YOUTH ATTITUDE  
TOWARD EARLY MARRIAGE

by  
Chuesee Vue

A Research paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Master of Science Degree With a Major  
in Hmong Economics Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

  
Thesis Advisor

The Graduate College  
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ABSTRACT

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(Title)	<u>Attitude of Hmong Youth Toward Early Marriage.</u>		
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The purpose of this study was to determine the attitude of Hmong youth toward early marriage. The subjects for this study were 50 Hmong youth from Dunn County who were attended middle and high school in Menomonie, Wisconsin. A total of 50 surveys were distributed to the students and 43 students participated in the study.

The instrument used for this study was developed and designed by the researcher. It divided into four sections: demographics used to gather information of age, gender, grade level, marital status, education and age perceived as the best time to marry. Section two used a Likert-type scale to assess the attitudes of Hmong youth towards early marriage. Section three consisted of statements about the age to marriage. Section four related to attitudes statements toward marriage.

Data were analyzed. Frequencies counts and percentages were calculated for demographics for the total group of respondents. The independent variables of grade level, age, gender and school level were compared using T-test on individual attitudes statements.

The results of the statistical analysis indicated that those students with more education and experiences were more aware of how important it is to marry at the age of 18 and older. Those students who have been in the United States for a short period of time had less education and tended to prefer marriage at younger ages. This study suggests that this population of Hmong students has conflict because the two cultures. Further research is needed to confirm the nature of the problem reported.

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## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgment .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Table .....	vi
<b>Chapter I- INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Objectives of the Study .....	5
Definition of Terms .....	5
<b>Chapter II- REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Geography and Population .....	7
Hmong Family Structure and Traditional Marriage .....	9
Conflicts of Family Values and Marriage in the United States .....	15
Summary .....	20
<b>Chapter III- RESEARCH METHOD</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Subjects .....	22
Instrument .....	22
Procedures .....	23
Analysis of Data .....	23
<b>Chapter IV- FINDING AND DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Demographic Information .....	25

**Table of Contents (cont.)**

Attitudes .....32

Age of Marriage .....34

Identified Attitudes Toward Marriage .....35

Discussion .....46

**Chapter V- SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....49**

Summary .....49

Conclusions .....52

Recommendation .....52

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.....54**

**APPENDIX A .....56**

**APPENDIX B .....61**



## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Table 1:	Age .....	26
Table 2:	Gender .....	26
Table 3:	Grade in School .....	27
Table 4:	Marital Status .....	27
Table 5:	When Decide to Get Married .....	28
Table 6:	Best Age to Marry .....	29
Table 7:	Prefer to Marry Someone Who is Employed .....	30
Table 8:	Hmong Youth Attitudes Towards Early Marriage .....	31
Table 9:	Age of Marriage .....	34
Table 10:	Feelings .....	36
Table 11:	T-test of Feelings by Grade Level .....	37
Table 12:	T-test of Age of Respondent and Attitudes Toward Marriage .....	39
Table 13:	Test Result by Gender of Respondent and Attitudes .....	40
Table 14:	T-test Difference of Attitudes by School Level .....	41
Table 15:	Respondent Classification by Best Age to Marry .....	42
Table 16:	Respondent Classification by Gender. Prefer to Marry Someone Age 16-18 .....	43
Table 17:	Gender of Respondent by Marrying at a Very Young Age to Have Help in the Home .....	45

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Hmong is one group of minority who lived mostly in the northern central part of Laos. In the early 1950 to 1960, thousands of Hmong fled to Southeast Asia to escape Chinese persecution. They had involved with the CIA Secret War during the Vietnam War. After the Vietnam War ended, there were hundred of thousands of Hmong were migrated to other countries, such as, the United States, France, Canada, Australia, Thailand, Burma and China. Many Hmong come to the United States because of the opportunity to start a new life without persecution. Recently, the Saint Paul Pioneer News indicated that there were approximately 150,000 individuals resided in the United States (Bonner, 1995). At the present time, there are about 40,000 individuals Hmong American living in Minnesota (Asian American Press, 1997), and 27,000 Hmong people who reside in Wisconsin. It is presently estimated, 2,600 living in Eau Claire County, and 1,400 are living in Dunn County (Hmong American Community Association, 1997).

One of the most unique features about Hmong culture is marriage. The traditional marriage can be traced back to fifty thousand years ago. The cultural ceremony is still practiced within the Hmong families in Asia. Hmong marriage involves negotiation between families, a dowry and a wedding ceremony. However, many Hmong in western countries prefer/lean toward the American and European marriage style. They want a simple and quick wedding instead of the traditional marriage that takes two or three days. They also want no negotiation between the two families and no dowry to be part of the wedding. In Hmong custom, the groom always ends up paying the bride's parents. The

bride price could be from one to six thousand dollars. Many young people today believe marriage in the Hmong culture economic. They believe that the dowry is unfair to the groom and that it is not fair to price the bride. Marriage is very important in Hmong cultures.

The research study explores the younger generation's opinions of Hmong marriage and how they would like it change. Young people see marriage a complicated. In America, people rely on income and educational background in making their decision about when to marry. They feel a need to have a decent job in order to support themselves, their spouse and family. Some Hmong couples marry at a young age. At the wedding, they let the parents take care the ceremony and cover all expenses. The elders conduct a traditional wedding. Those couples who are mature may choose between the traditional and modern wedding. Some couples have their marriage in the American way (Wu, C.Y. 1996).

Hmong marriage is involved with two families with different last names because Hmong believe two Hmong individuals who are carrying the same last name must shared the same ancestors or family. Thus, marrying someone with his or her own family name is taboo to the Hmong society. Hmong last names play a vital role in identifying the groom and bride and as well as indicating social structure in the Hmong community. Hmong from Laos consists of 18 different last names and these names are as follows: Chang, Cheng, Chue, Fang, Hang, Her, Khang, Kong, Kue, Lee, Lor, Moua, Pha, Thao, Vang, Vue, Xiong, and Yang. The Hmong from China and Vietnam may have more last names then the Hmong from Laos.

All members of the clan are considered as brothers and sisters. Brothers and cousins were all Kwv Tij, 'brothers' who mature together creating a cohesive mutually supportive group. A girl, on the other hand, married out of her clan into the lineage and clan of her husband. Traditionally, new couples live in large homes which house multigenerational households which eventually split into separate room without losing their close relationship with the patrilineage.

Clan perform important social, religious and economic functions and is often associated with relocation of its patrilineages. The hand labor required for relocation made the clan an essential organizational feature. A wife's relatives- necessarily from a clan other than the husband's-called the Neej Tsa (essentially the wife's male siblings' patri-clan) were also an instrumental and supportive group which became helpful during relocation (Cooper, 1986). The pattern of patrilineal clans, groups of males and their families sharing descent from a common male relative and residence with the husband's family, assumes responsibilities towards the wife's kin.

A boy and girl must marry outside their clan. Marital problem could very well create friction between the clans or extended family. Because Hmong boys and girls can not marry to their own kin, they always have to seek a spouse from a different clan ( Vue, C.S. 1995).

Very often Hmong parents prefer their sons and daughters to marry to their extended families who has a different last name ( second cousins). This helps to avoid conflict in marriage dispute between the clans and disease. This close extended family

marriage is believed to be a mutual relation based on respect and as well as general assistance (Vue, C. S. 1995).

Traditionally, Hmong practice polygamy and marriage between the age of 12 and 18 in the Hmong home land. One of the factors that contributed to early marriages in Laos was the need for additional family members to work in the fields and in the home. Bliatou (1988), indicated "life spans were short in Laos, so children were encouraged to get married early. Marriage age for girls was between 12 to 17 and boys was 15 to 20. The boy was expected to bring a young wife to the parent's home to be trained until the couple have one or two children. After that, the young couple would be permitted to live separate from the parents to establish their own family"

Since the Hmong-American comes from a culture different from western culture, they have faced many difficulties and hardships in the United States. This includes the conflicts between Hmong culture, religion belief and traditional marriage which occurs between Hmong parents and their adolescent children. Therefore, this issue needs to be studied to find out how the Hmong youth who are currently living in Dunn County view early marriage. This study is important because it describes the Hmong youth attitude toward early marriage in the United States.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitude of Hmong youth toward early marriage. Also, this study helped to determine attitudes toward early marriage of Hmong who were middle and high school students in Dunn County.

## Objectives of the Study

Specific research objectives were to:

1. Examine attitudes of Hmong youth toward early marriage.
2. Analyze attitudes toward marriage in relationship to age, grade level in school, and gender.

## Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms used in the study.

**Hmong**- A term meaning "free man" in the Hmong language. The Hmong are a groups people, with a specific language and culture, who live in scattered areas in China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, France and United States.

**Attitudes**- A mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

**Conflict**- A disagreement over two or more of the options that a group can take in trying to resolve a problem. Conflict also occurs when an individual's goal is perceived to be incompatible with the goals of others.

**Marriage**- This is an union between a man and a woman. They perform a public ritual (which means that their union is socially recognized), they are united sexually, and they cooperate in economic matters.

**Family**- A unit a two or more persons, of which one or more maybe children, who are related by blood, marriage, or affiliation and who cooperate economically and share a common dwelling place.

**Role**- The pattern of behavior expected of a person in a group or culture as a result of his or her social status, such as husband or wife in a family.

**Divorce**- This is the legal dissolution of a marriage.

**Arranged**- Marriage only parents have the proper knowledge to choose a wife or a husband for their children.

**Zij**- A person who forces another to marry.

**Sibpus**- The couple who elopes to somewhere or some place without parents know.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Literature

This chapter will be a brief literature review of Hmong geography and population. Hmong social organization and traditional marriage and conflict regarding marriage in the United States. Hmong people originated from China in the early 1800s. The Hmong migrated to Indochina and after the Vietnam War, thousands of Hmong have migrated to the United States and many other countries. The Hmong has its own unique and rich culture distinctive from other groups. Today, Hmong people are blending their culture to the mainstream of America. American culture is a very different from the Hmong culture and it has different laws and regulations. This requires major adjustments for the Hmong who have recently migrated.

### Geography and population

In China, the Hmong people are called the Miao. In the United States, they are known as the Hmong. By whatever name, these people share the same ethnic heritage. The Hmong history dates back thousands of years in China. A mid-19th-century rebellion by Hmong in the Guizhou Province led to millions of deaths. The failed rebellion caused a small percentage of Hmong to move elsewhere in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Vietnam and Laos (Xinfu, 1995). The Hmong are traditionally organized in peasant communities using slash-and-burn agriculture. They see themselves as members of a single sociocultural unit, as one people, regardless of dialectic and subcultural differences resulting from years of migration and geographical distances. (Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, 1990). An estimated 5 million Hmong continue to live in China. Thousands



of families migrated to southeast Asia in the 19th century and settled in the mountains of Laos as farmers. Hmong culture and society were destroyed by the Han Chinese, attacking from the North (Yang, 1990). Many of the Hmong survivors started migrating to the mountains of the northern part of Laos during the 19th century. After that they reached the mountains, Hmong sought peace, liberty, and freedom (Yang, 1990)

The Hmong people were recruited by the United States Central Intelligence Agency in the 1960s with promises of food, clothing, medicine and weapons in exchange for fighting against the Communists during the Vietnam War. At the University of Wisconsin-Stout workshop in the spring of 1995, Hmong leader General Vang Pao stated that "more than 35,000 Hmong died in the CIA's "Secret Army," including some boys as young as 10 or 12 years old and over 17,000 were wounded and crippled". General Pao also pointed out that when the United States pulled out of Laos in 1975, the Communist announced its intention to exterminate the Hmong people and began killing entire villages with poison gas. Many of the Hmong were driven from their homes and many fled from invaders ( and from chemical weapons, including "yellow rain" and other toxins), losing many lives as they traveled through the jungle and swam the Mekong river to reach refugee camps in Thailand. These refugee camps are temporary processing areas until a final destination is decided upon by the Hmong. Shortly after that, social agencies began sponsoring Hmong immigration to the United States (Vang, 1995).

The first group of Hmong-American refugees, about 9,000, arrived during the years 1975 to 1978. As was the case with other Indochinese who arrived during this period, this group contained many individuals, including many clan leaders, with social

and economic characteristics that made it easier for them to blend into the mainstream and to become self-sufficient members of American society (Bach, 1988). Fass, (1991), pointed out that there were 43,000 Hmong-American who followed their leaders to the United States during the years 1979 to 1982. These refugees, were unprepared for the world of salaried employment. Adults were illiterate in the English language; they had little prior vocational skills and experience to draw upon beyond home decoration, slash-and-burn agriculture, and warfare. They had negligible exposure to western society and culture. The Hmong people who arrived during this period, needed more time than their ancestors to come to grips with the culture of wage employment, to compete for the secure wage-paying work, and to develop work habits that would assure job retention (Fass, 1991, p. 11-12).

#### **Hmong family structure and traditional marriage**

The traditional Hmong family is still patriarchal. Hmong families may consist of three or perhaps four generations. Daughters, when married, join their husbands' families. The head of the Hmong family is a man, who supposedly takes care of all the business outside of his house and supports the family financially. The wife is the "interior minister," in charge of cooking, educating the children, and dealing with the household budget. In Laos, women married as young as 12 years of age, moving directly from childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood (Potter and Whiren, 1982). Children are considered wealth (the more the better) because they will care for the parents when they get old. Hmong do not have Social Security nor homes for the Hmong elderly. They take care of their elders similar to the Chinese tradition.

As in many other agrarian-based societies, marriage was a family concern, not a private matter between a couple in love. In fact, love was not a prerequisite for marriage and was highly discouraged. Because the bride lived with the husband's parents, the parents felt that they should have an important voice in the decision about who would live with them. The arranged marriage, another characteristic of the traditional Hmong family, is a classic case of not leaving important decisions to the impetuous young. In many cases, the son did not know who the bride was until after the wedding ceremony when the bride unveiled her face.

A female in the Hmong culture has these rules to follow: Submit to her father when a girl, submit to her husband when married, and submit to her eldest son if she becomes a widow. It is not customary for a child to call an adult by name, without a title. Therefore, Hmong children are likely to call their parents' friends, their neighbors or their friends' parents "uncles" or "aunts," even though they are often not related at all. This has caused much confusion in the United States, especially among those teachers and others who work with Hmong children.

In the United States, the roles of Hmong men and women are changing. The man may be unemployed or underemployed-and no longer the principal support of the family. He may have to stay at home, taking care of the children. Often it is easier for the wife to get a job, and work outside the home. She is no longer able to devote so much of her time to family chores. She may also have a different concept of life and womanhood, which causes great conflict in the family. Naturally, the children are affected. They see

family roles changing, and they may no longer look to their father as the most powerful person, or the model.

Divorce is rare in Hmong culture in Laos. Marital disagreements are usually resolved by family members or clan leaders. Should the couple divorce, the children are obligated to stay with their father's clan. Therefore, if a Hmong woman decides to divorce she must relinquish her children (Meredith and Rowe, 1986).

In the Hmong culture, basically, the parents often selected their children's mates. Such choice, however, were not as arbitrary as it may seem. Parents tried to choose partners whom their children already knew and with whom they seemed compatible. The children were expected to accept their parents' choices of a mate. This technique which originated in China in ancient times has been preserved to the present time. Vang (1990) stated that "when an individual who breaks the custom and traditional principle he/she is breaking Hmong law. Hmong believe that the morality between right and wrong of mankind is part of the cultural structure."

In Hmong traditional, young Hmong men are welcome to visit teenage girls in their parent's homes, however unsupervised dating is forbidden. If a boy takes a girl out and return her late, the parents may refuse to accept their daughter back into their house for fear that their family's reputation will be ruined. A girl who dates develops a bad reputation which reflects poorly on her whole family. If a boy abducts the girl from her parents in order to marry her, a popular method of hastening the wedding day in Laos, the parents can not allow the girl to return to their home for at least three days or a curse will fall on the family (Vue, C. 1995).

During to our conversation, Vue also stated that Hmong new year, parties, and ceremonies are usually an occasion for Hmong to gather, meet, see, and even chose the loved one. Hmong new year is the most important time for Hmong youngsters to find their match (husband or wife). The society and community have set aside this time for singles to find a mate. The majority weddings are chosen by the love couple. Hmong also practice arranged marriage and sometimes kidnapping. The newly wedded couple are expected to serve both his/her families. While the girl is married, she becomes a members of her husband's family right after the religion ceremony. Due to religious beliefs she can not be divorced from him. This doesn't mean that in the Hmong community there are no divorced people. Once in while, there is a Hmong couple who are divorced. Hmong can not marry a person that has the same last name. If there is anyone who breaks the Hmong law and marries to his/her spouse with the same last name, the couple might runaway and live in an isolated life away from the community. There is no wedding or religion ceremony performance for these couples.

Among the Hmong in Laos, the methods of marriage negotiations is that if a girl is willing to marry, the man will take her to his home quietly. Then message is sent to inform her parents. If the man does not live too far away, the girl's mother may go there to claim her back. The girl's mother may even use violence on her daughter and her intended husband to show displeasure and that she does not allow her daughter to marry the boy. This verbal and physical abuse has to be accepted without retaliation, and has to be manifested even when the girl's parents secretly approve of this match. This disapproval demonstrates their reluctance to hand over their daughter so that her husband

knows he must take good care of the daughter and know how highly her parents valued her (Lee, 1986).

One other method of marriage in Hmong culture is called ZIJ (boyfriend forcing girlfriend to marry). This procedure is for the man and a handful of male relatives to 'abduct' the girl at a pre-arranged place, often with the girl's full knowledge and consent. She will then scream for help, and her mother will come to her rescue, using verbal abuse and brandishing a stick. If the daughter indicates that she is unwilling to be carried off for marriage, the mother will rain blows upon the boy and his males relatives or friends. On the other hand, if the girl shows willingness to go with the boy and his relatives/friends, the mother's blows will be on her for being too eager to get married ( Lee, 1986).

In general, after the marriage ceremony, the young couple lives with the husband's family. The new daughter-in-law has to completely adjust and adapt to her husband's parents. She is expected to obey her husband's parents and to do everything to please them. The couple would live with the husband's parents until they are able to build their own house or afford to live independently.

Age has little significance to the Hmong culture when it comes to marriage. As a matter of fact, some Hmong parents may encourage their daughter as early as age 12 or 14 to date an older man over the age of 18. Hmong parents who pursue such actions consider themselves "good parents." They know their daughter will have a husband who is capable of taking care of her needs. They then have one less daughter or child to worry about. On the other hand, young Hmong girls may pursue older men (over the age 18) because they may be more independent, stable, or mature compared to boys their own

age. Another reason young Hmong girls seek relationships with older men is that they might possess material things such as fashionable clothing, a sports car or money which easily can draw the girl's attention. During this stage of the girl's development, it is considered "cool" for young Hmong girls to be seen with older men. Usually, the older men have more time and money to spend with the girls than boys their own age. Sometimes even Hmong men have affairs with younger Hmong girls knowing that they can be easily manipulated by just buying them gifts (Lee, 1997). Nhia Vang Lee also stated that there are some of the reasons why Hmong men have a tendency to pursue younger Hmong girls:

- 1). Unavailability of Hmong women close to their age: most are either married or have boyfriends.
- 2). Problems within their own marriage: separation or divorce.
- 3). Lack of feeling closeness or love for their spouse.
- 4). Disinterest in Hmong women their own age: women over the age of 18 are considered too "old" to marry.
- 5). A desire to feel alive and young at heart.

Early marriage is still a common practice. However, it is often kept secret until the girl turns eighteen. Consequently, many young Hmong women who become pregnant are stigmatized as single mothers by the school authorities. However, they are seen by Hmong as perfectly normal within their cultural tradition. This is a very sensitive topic, and has resulted in tension between American authorities/service providers and the Hmong community (Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, 1990).

In Laos, the boy's parents "had to choose a daughter-in-law who was able to work in the house and the fields and carry heavy things on her back (Yang, 1997). The man could not marry a young girl who could not do anything. That is why the parents didn't approve for the boy to marry a very young girl (Yang, 1997).

The acceptable age for marriage began to descend in 1962, when the war against the Vietnamese and Pathet Lao Communists forced most Hmong people off their farms and into large, urban military bases. "Many people didn't have anything to do," so they started marrying younger to occupy themselves (Lee, 1997).

The Hmong custom of the groom giving a bride payment to the bride's family also has persisted and ranges in price from about \$1,500 to \$5,000. This practice has mixed implications and opinions about it vary. Some women felt it insures them of a certain value. The psychological effect of this bride price is sometimes manifested by women, who express hopelessness in that they had no choice regarding what happened in their lives. The bride price also had implications for divorce; it needs to be considered in view of the possibility of losing this large payment (Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, 1990).

### **Conflicts of family values and marriage in the United States**

Today in the United States, most Hmong parents feel incapable of preventing their underage youths' marriage. They can not control their children because it's freedom in this country. Many of Hmong parents worry about their daughters will get pregnant if they go out with the young boys. Hmong parents concern that the pattern of early marriage; the American emphasis on freedom and independence; the opportunities at school and at after school activities for the two sexes to socialize; the frequently



sponsored dances at which Hmong bands play electronic instruments and Hmong young girls and boys appear in elegant cloths/dresses; sex education in the schools; and suggestive American television shows and public behavior. This is unacceptable for the Hmong parents in the United States. Lee Nhia Vang, an elder advisor for the Institute for Education and Advocacy in Minneapolis, MN and father of four.

Hmong parents in Laos used to discipline their children by hitting them with their hand or a stick if any children who did something wrong for the family and community. Children here find every way to manipulate authority, Lee says. "They can mobilize themselves and take off from the parents... then their parents scold them, they just say to their parents, " if you fight or hit me, I will call the police and put you in jail." Lee, 1997 also said that children can get their parents to buckle in to their demands by threatening to abandon them when they're too old to take care of themselves, instead of following the Hmong traditional value.

Economic changes are also blamed for the trend toward early marriage and the weakening of the marriage bond. In Laos, during the 1950s, it was up to the boy's parents to raise the money to pay a hefty "nurturing charge." The price was six to 10 bars of silver, and it usually took one or three years to earn just one bar of silver, depending on the success of the family's only cash crop. By comparison, a water buffalo or a horse would cost one or two bars of silver (Lee, 1997).

In Laos, the nurturing charge was the most expensive payment a man would make in his lifetime. In the United States, the price is \$2,000 to \$4,000; many young men have already purchased a car more expensive than that. "The price to get married here is

nothing compared to what it was in Laos, said job counselor Manh Her. Manh Her estimates that it would take no more than six months to a year to save up enough for the nurturing charge in the United States. If the family is in a hurry, it might also be able to borrow a few hundred dollars from each of the young man's uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and relatives. In Laos, relatives were reluctant to lend money because they knew it would be hard for the family to earn the money to pay them back; here, money flows more easily because of the welfare system and wage labor, and borrowing is far more common (Her, 1994).

Many of the traditional values of the Hmong family are still held by the majority of those now in America. However, the American economic system tends to force some changes in Hmong family values. For example, Hmong children are becoming more economically independent. Many young Hmong are now able to work and bring home wages and salaries. Traditionally, the majority of this group would be nonproductive members of their families. If they were students, they would have to depend on their parents for financial support. In addition, many Hmong parents are aware of the fact that their children know more about America and Americans than they do; therefore, young Hmong are now allowed more freedom (Vang, 1996).

Parents also no longer require their children to live with them until they get married as they did in their home land. Many young Hmong, because of their job and career situations, have to move away from home to work in another city or state. Hmong are changing their attitudes toward dating and marriage. Boys and girls are allowed to go to parties at night without parental supervision. Family members are still expected to

help each other. However, there are some changes in the roles of family members as a result of external influences from the new sociocultural environment ( Lee, 1997).

Many Hmong refugee fathers spent their lives as soldiers and farmers in Laos. Their entire professional careers involved military service and farming with perhaps one or two weeks annual vacation with their family. A majority of them never played the roles of full-time father or head of the family. They depended on their wives to take care of the family and raise the children. As a result, the Hmong father in America has had to learn how to adjust to American society and to being a full-time father and husband. He has also had to learn to accept the fact that he has no absolute power over his family. His wife, likewise, is now able to get a job and bring home money. His children are living in a different culture: they think and act differently, and he finds that his use of the types of punishment that he could have used in their home land to correct or discipline his children is not always acceptable (Lee, 1997).

At the Private Industry Council workshop, La Crosse HMAA Executive Director Thai Vue ( 1997) stated "Hmong parents in America no longer make all decisions regarding their children's marriages. The relocation from Laos to America destroyed many traditional ceremonies that were part of the marriage celebration. Hmong teenagers are more economically independent from their parents and more self-sufficient. They have more freedom to make decisions on all matters relating to their marriage. Parents and older members of the family still exercise important influence over their children's marriages, but their influence is not absolute.

Most Hmong parents still expect their children to marry other Hmong people rather than people of another race. Interracial marriage is still an uncommon practice among Hmong Americans (Vue, 1997). In regard to the traditional goal of marriage, many young Hmong in America, unlike their parents, do not see bearing children as the ultimate goal of marriage. For Birth control methods are becoming more widely used by many young Hmong and this is affecting family size. However, Hmong youth organizations in the United States are influenced by the teachings of their organizations regarding birth control. In fact, the youth organization has significant influence on Hmong youth's lives in this new society. In Laos, before and during the Vietnam War, Hmong individual clan leaders were the most powerful person in each individual village or town. The combination of Hmong culture, which emphasizes that the ultimate goal of one's marriage is to bear children, seems to affect the Hmong youth in the United States. However, more and more young Hmong are venturing into a new era of sexual freedom, and premarital sexual activities are increasingly common among young people (Vue, 1997).

The size of families among young couples also tends to be smaller. As a matter of fact, many young couples are realizing that it is costly to have children in America and that their new standard of living does not allow them to have as many children as they might like to have. The new economic environment has changed traditional values and practices pertaining to marriage among the younger generation of Hmong (Vue, 1997).

## Conclusion

Hmong is a group of people with a specific language and culture who live in scattered areas in China, Laos, Thailand, France, Australia and United States. Hmong, who originated in China, have migrated during the mid-19th-century into Southeast Asia and remained to the present time in this country and around the world. Hmong society is characterized by its division into clans. The clan membership plays an important role in defining social relationships. A man must marry outside his clan and relationships between the clans must be maintained in such a way that marriage can be arranged and proceed smoothly. Marriages, which are a form of social exchange, are the concern of whole families and, less intensely, of the clan groupings of which the families are a part. It is not uncommon for boys and girls to marry between the age of 12 and 18 years.

The Hmong household often consists of the eldest male, his wife, children, unmarried brothers and sisters and sometimes grandchildren. The family is the primary institution of the society. Order and authority in the household are maintained by respect for age.

In Hmong traditional structure, when couple get married, the wife joins her husband's household and becomes part of his extended family. Males are clearly head of the family and the sole providers. Women raise the children, care for the home and relate close to the members in the family clan. It would be a mistake to think that because husbands are the head of the family, wives do not have an important role.

Since Hmong have migrated to the United States, society, parents no longer make the decisions regarding their children's marriages. Hmong parents still exercise influence

over their children's marriage, but their influence is not absolute. The teenagers are more economically independent from the parents and more self-sufficient. Many of the Hmong teenagers in this country prefer the American marriage style. They want a simple wedding and do not want negotiation between the two families and a dowry to be part of the wedding. Some couples may run away to establish their own families without the consent of their parents. This is not an acceptable culture/structure for the Hmong parents because they feel that they lost power, authority and discipline.

## CHAPTER III

### Research Method

This is a study which is designed to describe the Hmong youth who are currently living in Dunn County regarding their point of view toward early marriage. Data was gathered through a survey of a sample of Hmong youth.

#### Subjects

The subjects for this study were 50 Hmong youth students randomly selected from Dunn County who are currently attending in Middle and High School in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Half of these students also had experience with early marriage. Twenty-five surveys were distributed to females, and the other twenty-five surveys were distributed to males.

This descriptive research study only focuses on Hmong youth students. There is a limitation of age for this study. The Hmong students who have participated this research study ranging age from 12 to 18 years.

#### Instrument

This survey questionnaire was developed by the researcher to measure Hmong youth's attitudes toward early marriage. The survey instrument was divided into four sections. The first section was used to gather information of age, gender, grade level, marital status, education and the age perceived as the best time to marry. Section two used a 24 Likert-type Scale items designed to assess the attitudes of Hmong youth towards early marriage. The participants' perception levels were described with statements using words such as, "I prefer an arranged marriage". Section three used

yes/no responses to determine the age range of marriage of Hmong youth in Menomonie Middle and High School. Section four identified attitudes toward marriage. The degree of reading level for this questionnaire was reasonable and suitable for most levels of readers.

### **Procedures**

Prior to the beginning of Spring 1997, the researcher had contacted with the Hmong American Community Association's Youth Counselor and asked to distribute the survey to the Hmong students who currently attended in Menomonie Middle and High School. A consent letter was sent to Hmong parents who had child/ren attending school and asked for permission of their son/daughter to participate in the study before the survey questions were distributed through the Hmong American Community Association's Youth Counselor. There were 50 survey instruments given to the participants and 43 were returned to the counselor with completed information. This represents a response of 86% of the participants. It took a person approximately 10 to 20 minutes to complete all the questions.

### **Analysis of data**

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were computed in each item and calculated for ages, gender, grade in school, marital status, marry person with higher education, the right person to marry and age range to marry. The results will indicate the percentage of those who responded to each alternative item of the questionnaire.



T-tests were computed on the attitudes towards early marriage based on age, gender and school level.

## CHAPTER IV

### Findings and Discussion

This descriptive research study was conducted to examine attitudes of Hmong youth toward early marriage. This chapter is divided into four sections. The demographic information were discussed in tables one through seven. Attitudes of Hmong youth toward early marriage were addressed with means and standard deviations in table eight. The third group of table listed the yes responses of the age range of marriage in table nine. Concerns about when to marry were discussed in table ten. A discussion section followed.

### Demographic Information

The instrument used in this research study was given to 50 students at the Menomonie Middle and High School. Forty three students or 86 percent of the student completed the survey.

#### Age

The ages of the students range from 12 to 21 years. Two students (5%) range age of 12. 11 students (27.5%) ranged in age of 13-14. 21 students (52.5%) ranged in age of 15-16 and 6 students (15%) ranged in age of 17-18. See Table 1.

**Table 1**

Age

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
12 or younger	2	5.0
13-14	11	27.5
15-16	21	52.5
17-18	6	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Gender**

Twenty-two students ( 51.2% ) in this study were female and 21 students ( 48.8% ) were male. See table 2.

**Table 2**

Gender

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	22	51.2
Male	21	48.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Grade in school**

This research study examined students in grade levels Middle and High School. Fourteen students ( 32.6% ) were in middle school and 29 students ( 67.4% ) were in high school. See table 3.

### Marital status

The research study showed that two students ( 4.7% ) were married and 41 students ( 95.3% ) were single. See table 4.

**Table 3**

Grade in School

Grade in School	Frequency	Percent
Middle School	14	32.6
High School	29	67.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 4**

Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	2	4.7
Single	41	95.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### When to get married

Respondents were asked when they would like to get married. Seven students ( 17.5% ) were indicated that they would like to get married after graduating from high school. 2 students ( 5.0% ) indicated that they decided to marry after completion Vocational School. 6 students ( 15.0% ) wanted to marry after two years degree. 10

students ( 25.0% ) decided to marry after a four years college degree, eight students (20.0%) decided to marry after graduating with master degree or higher. See table 5.

**Table 5**

When Decide to Get Married

<b>When Decide to Get Married</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
High School	7	17.5
Vocation	2	5.0
2 years degree	6	15.0
4 years degree	10	25.0
Master degree/higher	8	20.0
Not apply	7	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Best age to marry**

Subjects were asked to indicate the best age to marry. The largest group of respondents indicated age 20 years (N=8, 18.6%). Seven respondents (16.3%) selected the age of 18 years. There were only two students (4.7%) who preferred the age of 17 and two students (4.7%) preferred the age of 27 or older. The majority of students preferred the age range from 18 to 25 years. See table 6.

**Table 6**

Best Age to Marry

<b>Best age to marry</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
17 years-old	2	4.7
18 year-old	7	16.3
19 year-old	2	4.7
20 year-old	8	18.6
21 year-old	4	9.3
22 year-old	4	9.3
23 year-old	5	11.6
24 year-old	3	7.0
25 year-old	5	11.6
26 year-old	1	2.3
27 or older	2	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Prefer to marry someone is employed**

In response to "I prefer to marry someone is employed," the majority of the students (N=37, 88.1%) reported preferring a spouse who is employed. Five students (11.9%) reported preferring a spouse who is not employed. See table 7.

**Table 7**

Prefer to Marry Someone Who is Employed

<b>Prefer to marry someone employed</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	37	88.1
No	5	11.9
	1	Missing
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 8**

## Hmong Youth Attitudes Towards Early Marriage

Attitude Item	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Rank Order
5. Want mate who is easy to get along with.	8.326	1.248	1
17. View marriage as a life long commitment.	8.279	1.386	2
24. Prefer to marry whenever I am ready.	8.209	1.407	3
14. Someone assertive/honest/intelligent.	8.163	1.542	4
4. Mate shows warmth/empathy/genuineness.	8.047	1.479	5
6. Marry someone mature/control of themselves.	7.907	1.645	6
23. Marriage ceremony/most important event.	7.372	1.826	7
12. Arrangement of marry is not acceptable.	6.977	2.283	8
21. Prefer to live with my husband's family.	6.682	2.853	9
11. Parents have no right to choose my mate.	6.628	2.895	10
22. Prefer to bring wife to stay with parents.	6.524	2.804	11
15. Someone who never had a sexual experience.	6.488	2.558	12
1. Marry person with higher education than I.	6.442	2.207	13
3. Marry someone who is approve by parents.	5.907	2.234	14
19. Elope if not allowed to marry for love.	5.907	2.399	15
7. Difficult to marry someone who I love.	5.744	2.583	16
8. Like to marry using an American ceremony.	5.186	2.612	17
9. Difficult understanding Hmong tradition.	4.907	2.467	18



**Table 8 continue**

10. Marry in case I do somethin wrong.	4.395	2.301	19
16. Marry someone different from my ethnic origin.	4.302	1.994	20
13. Arranged marriage is a good idea.	4.023	3.028	21
20. worry that I'm not attractive enough.	3.884	2.312	22
18. View marriage as a game-1 wins/1 loses.	2.209	2.465	23
2. Marry a younger person who has no education.	2.070	1.737	24

**Attitudes of Hmong Youth Toward Early Marriage**

Section II of the instrument examined attitudes of Hmong youth toward early marriage. Students were asked to rate 24 questions using a 1-9 Likert Type-Scale with responses ranging from (1) Disagree Strongly, (3) Slightly Disagree, (5) Undecided, (7) Slightly Agree and (9) Agree Strongly. Five of the 24 items received a total group mean score above 8.0 on the scale. The five most positive responses for the total group indicated that the respondents agreed that: "want mate who is easy to get along with" ( $\bar{x}=8.326$ ), "view marriage as a life long commitment" ( $\bar{x}=8.279$ ), "prefer to marry whenever I am ready" ( $\bar{x}=8.209$ ) "someone assertive/honest/intelligent" ( $\bar{x}=8.163$ ), and "mate shows warmth/empathy/genuineness" ( $\bar{x}=8.047$ ).

Means of six items were between 8.0 to 6.5 indicating respondents slightly agreed with these attitude statements. Two mean scores were between 7.0 and 8.0 statement ( $\bar{x}=7.907$ ) "marry someone mature/control of themselves is important to me." and

statements number 23 which stated "marriage ceremony is one of the most important events in a person's life" ( $\bar{x}=7.372$ ). Respondents slightly agreed with the following statements: number 12. "arrangement of marry is not acceptable" ( $\bar{x}=6.977$ ), number 21 "I prefer to live with my husband's family after the marriage ceremony" ( $\bar{x}=6.682$ ), number 11 "my parents have no right to choose my mate" ( $\bar{x}=6.628$ ), and number 22 "I prefer to bring my wife to stay with my parents" (6.524).

Respondents slightly disagreed with the following attitude statements: Number 13. "an arranged marriages are a good idea" ( $\bar{x}=4.023$ ), number 20 "I worry that I am not attractive enough" ( $\bar{x}= 3.884$ ), and number 18 "I view marriage as a game-I wins/I loses" ( $\bar{x}=2.209$ ). The most negative mean score of all the 24 questions was number 2 which stated that the respondents did not "prefer marry a younger person who has no education" ( $\bar{x}=2.070$ ).

**Table 9**

Age of Marriage

Items	Frequency	Percent (Yes)
6. Easy to decide when I find one I love	36	83.7
1. Marrying between age 12 to 14 is too early	35	81.4
5. Have abilities to choose my own mate	29	76.3
8. Not good idea to marry second cousin	30	73.2
10. Marry a young age to have help in home	28	66.7
9. It is OK to marry between ages 14 to 18	22	55.0
2. Marrying someone 26 and older is too old	22	53.7
3. Prefer to marry someone age 16 to 18	20	48.8
7. Girl/boy friends. don't know who to marry	20	46.5
4. Best to marry second cousin who I trust	8	19.5

**Age to marry**

Section III of the survey made statements about the age of marriage. The respondent was to circle yes or no for whichever they believe is true for them at the left of each statement.

The top three questions that common for the respondents were the items number six which stated "it is easy for me to come up with my own decision when I find someone who I love", item number one which stated "marrying between the age of 12 to 14 is too early" and item number five which stated "it is not a good idea to marry my second

cousin because I consider that we are brother and sister.” The least frequently selected statements were the item number three which the respondents would “prefer to marry someone age 16 to 18”, item number seven which stated “girlfriends/boyfriends, don’t know who to marry” and item number four which stated “marry to second cousin who I trust, is best.”

### **Identified attitude toward marriage**

Table 10 presented the results of Hmong youth attitudes toward marriage by what bothered them questions 1-12 in section IV on the survey. Three of the 12 questions received a total group mean scores above 3.0 on the four point scale. The two most positive mean scores were the items number 8 ( $\bar{x}=3.279$ ) which stated “bothered to marry one without high school diploma” and item number 2 ( $\bar{x}=3.116$ ) which stated feeling that I have too many responsibilities by marrying one with no education”.

Three questions received a total group mean score below 2.0 on the four-point scale. The most negative mean scores of all the 12 questions were statement number 7 which stated “marrying a person who has an education, will lead to a power struggle” ( $\bar{x}=1.884$ ), number 6 which was “marrying one with education will not be respected” ( $\bar{x}=1.814$ ) and number 9 which stated “bothered to marry one with no sexual experience” ( $\bar{x}=1.419$ ).

**Table 10**

## Feelings

Item	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Rank Order
8. Bothered to marry one without high school Diploma	3.279	.984	1
2. Feeling that I have too many responsibilities by marrying a person who has no education.	3.116	1.005	2
12. It bothers me that Hmong parents in America make all the decisions for their children.	3.070	.910	3
5. I feel that by marrying a person who has no education. I gain power and value.	2.930	.961	4
10. I don't agree with Hmong culture which individuals to marry at a young age.	2.930	.936	5
11. In traditional Hmong society, boys and girls were allowed to marry at a very young age. I am bothered.	2.930	.828	6
1. Feeling that I have too little authority by marrying a person who has a higher education than me.	2.163	.998	7
3. If I marry someone with a higher education than myself I will feel I have lost power.	2.093	1.109	8
4. I feel that by marrying a person who has no education. I gain power and control.	2.047	1.068	9
7. I feel that marrying a person who has an education. will lead to a power struggle between us. I am bothered.	1.884	1.051	10
6. I feel that by marrying a person who has an education. I will not be a respected person in the family. I am bothered.	1.814	.906	11
9. I am bothered by marrying someone who has never had a sexual experience.	1.419	.823	12

**Table 11.**

T-test on Feelings by Grade Level

Item	Middle School N=19 $\bar{X}$	SD	High School N=24 $\bar{X}$	SD	T Value	T Prob.
11. In traditional Hmong society, boys and girls were allowed to marry at a very young age, I am bothered.	2.6316	.761	3.1667	.816	-2.20	.05
2. Feeling that I have too many responsibilities by marrying a person who has no education.	3.5000	.855	2.9310	1.033	1.78	.082

There was a significant difference in feelings by grade level. A significant difference at the .05 probability level was found between middle and high school students on the item "in traditional Hmong society, boys and girls were allowed to marry at a very young age, I am bothered". High school students scored 3.16 whereas middle school students scored 2.63. This means middle school students were less bothered than high school students.

There was a trend at the .082 level item 2. Students who were in middle school ( $\bar{x}$ =3.5000) agreed more with the statement, "feeling that I have too many responsibilities by marrying a person who has no education" than students in high school ( $\bar{x}$ =2.9310). See table 11.

The following results presented of attitude statements on the survey questions number 1 and number 24 in section II. The results shows the mean and standard

deviation for the total group (n=43) on all questions. The t-tests of age of respondent will be discussed first. Gender and school level will follow.

Table 12 shows the significant differences between t-test results of age of respondent and attitudes toward marriage. There were two significant differences between the ages of 14 and younger with the 15 and older group on attitudes and one significant trends. On item number 12, the students who were 14 and younger ( $\bar{x}=8.0769$ ) agreed with the statement, "arrangement of marry is not acceptable," than students age 15 and older ( $\bar{x}=6.5556$ ). The t-value was 2.06 with a probability of .05 level. On item 18, students ages 14 and younger ( $\bar{x}=1.1538$ ) were less likely to feel that marriage is a game-1 wins/1 losses than students ages 15 and older ( $\bar{x}=2.0741$ ). There was a t-value of -2.04 with a probability of .05. Item 20 was the statement, "worry that I'm not attractive enough." Students ages 14 and younger ( $\bar{x}=3.0769$ ) thought they has less worry that they are not attractive enough than students ages 15 and older ( $\bar{x}=4.5185$ ) were more worried. This trend had a t-value of -1.91 with a probability of .064 level.

**Table 12**

T-Test of Age of Respondent and Attitudes Toward Marriage

Item	14 and younger N=13		15 and older N=27		T Value	T Prob.
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
12. Arrangement of marry is not acceptable	8.0769	1.553	6.5556	2.423	2.06	.046
18. View marriage as a game-1 wins/1 loses	1.1538	.376	2.0741	2.286	-2.04	.051
20. Worry that I'm not attractive enough	3.0769	2.465	4.5185	2.119	-1.91	.064

T-test of Gender of Respondent and Attitudes Toward Marriage

Comparing boys and girls for the attitudes toward marriage, there were five significant differences and a trend found. The significant differences between genders at the .05 level were found for question numbers 8, 9, 12, 23 and 24 on the item 1 to 24 on attitude statements. The males mean score was significantly higher ( $\bar{x}=6.0000$ ) than females ( $\bar{x}=4.3333$ ) on the item "I would like to marry and use an American ceremony". On item 9 which stated "I have difficulty understanding the Hmong tradition of marriage because I grew up in America", males mean score was 5.68 while females mean score was 4.09. Regarding the item "The arrangement of marrying is not acceptable to me because I have my own rights", males ( $\bar{x}=7.7273$ ) also had significantly higher mean scores than females ( $\bar{x}=6.1905$ ). Another item which males mean score was higher than



females "The marriage ceremony is one of the most important events in a person's life in my culture". The mean score for males was 7.90 compared to females of 6.80. Thus, males scored significantly higher on these four items than females. In contrast females scored significantly higher than males on item "prefer to marry whenever I am ready." The female mean was 8.66 and the male mean was 7.77. The trend was on item 3 which stated "It is important to marry someone who is approved by parents". The males mean score was lower ( $\bar{x}=5.2727$ ) than females ( $\bar{x}=6.5714$ ). See table 13.

**Table 13**

Test Result by Gender of Respondent and Attitudes

Item	Male N=22		Female N=21		T Value	T Prob.
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
3. Marry someone who is approve by parents	5.2727	2.272	6.5714	2.039	-1.97	.056
8. Like to marry using an American ceremony	6.0000	2.563	4.3333	2.436	2.18	.05
9. Difficulty understanding Hmong tradition	5.6818	2.514	4.0952	2.189	2.20	.05
12. Arrangement of marry is not acceptable	7.7273	1.980	6.1905	2.358	2.32	.05
23. Marriage ceremony/most important event	7.9091	1.411	6.8095	2.064	2.05	.05
24. Prefer to marry whenever I am ready	7.7727	1.716	8.6667	.796	-2.21	.05

**Table 14**

T-Test Difference of Attitudes by School Level

Item	Middle School N=14		High School N=29		T Value	T Prob.
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
12. Arrangement of marry is not acceptable	7.8571	1.703	6.5517	2.429	1.80	.079

For the t-test difference of attitudes by school level, middle school slightly agreed the item "The arrangement of marry is not acceptable to me because I have my own rights", than high school students. The mean score of middle school students ( $\bar{x}=7.8571$ ) was significantly higher than high school students ( $\bar{x}=6.5517$ ). This indicated that middle school students were more positive about arrange marriage than high school students.

See table 14.

**Table 15**

Respondent Classification by Best Age to Marry

Count				
Expected Value		Yes-Checked	No-Not Checked	
Row Percent				
Column Percent				Row
Total Percent		1	2	Total
20 or Younger	1	14	3	17
		9.4	7.7	42.5%
		82.4%	17.6%	
		63.6%	16.7%	
		35.0%	7.5%	
21 or older	2	8	15	23
		12.7	10.4	57.5%
		34.8%	65.2%	
		36.4%	83.3%	
		20.0%	37.5%	
	Column	22	18	40
	Total	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%
<u>Chi-Square</u>		<u>Value</u>	<u>DF</u>	
<u>Significance</u>				
Pearson		8.93746	1	.00279

Using Pearson's coefficient, there was a significant difference at .01 level between respondents regarding the best age to marry. Those who thought it is OK to marry between ages 14 and 18 also indicated that the best age to marry was 20 years or younger.

**Table 16**

Respondent Classification by Gender: Prefer to Marry Someone Age 16-18.

Count	Expected Value	Row Percent	Column Percent	Total Percent	Yes-Checked	No-Not Checked	Row Total	
					1	2		
Female	1	5	9.8	25.0%	25.0%	15	75.0%	20
				12.2%		71.4%	48.8%	
						36.6%		
Male	2	15	10.2	71.4%	75.0%	6	28.6%	21
				36.6%		28.6%	51.2%	
						14.6%		
Column Total		20	48.8%			21	51.2%	41
								100.0%
<u>Chi- Square</u>		<u>Value</u>				<u>DF</u>		
<u>Significance</u>								
Pearson		8.83801				1		
.00295								

Utilizing Pearsons' coefficient, there was a significant difference,  $P < .01$ , regarding gender by preferring to marry someone age 16 to 18. Male checked between these ages more than female. The possibility existed that male preferred to marry at the ages of 16 to 18 because they would think that marry to someone who was 16 to 18 would more attractive to marry than the ages of 19 and older. The ages of 19 and older is too old for the Hmong youth males to marry. Fewer female checked by preferring to marry someone age 16 to 18. This possibility that Hmong female would preferred to marry at

the ages of 19 and older because they believed that marry to a man who is 19 and older would have experience about life and mature person so there will be reduced for the divorce situations, according to Hmong traditional marriage and culture believe.

**Table 17**

Gender of Respondent by Marrying at a Very Young Age to Have Help in the Home.

Count	Yes-Checked	No-Not Checked	Row
Expected Value			
Row Percent			
Column Percent			
Total Percent	1	2	Total
Female	9	12	21
	14.0	7.0	50.0%
	42.9%	57.1%	
	32.1%	85.7%	
	21.4%	28.6%	
Male	19	2	21
	14.0	7.0	50.0%
	90.5%	9.5%	
	67.9%	14.3%	
	45.2%	4.8%	
Column Total	28	14	42
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
<u>Chi-Square</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>DF</u>	
<u>Significance</u>			
Pearson	10.71429	1	
.00106			

Regarding gender who want to marry at a very young age to have help in the home. Male checked this category more than female did. There is possibility that the male want to marry early because they need to have someone to help support the boy's family. This is also possibility that Hmong male prefers a young Hmong girl because a woman who over the age of 18 is considered too old to marry in Hmong home land.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of young Hmong living in Dunn County towards early marriage and traditional Hmong marriage customs as opposed to American, or Western, customs. The ages of the youth surveyed were 12-21 years old.

The research was conducted among 50 middle and high school students in Menomonie, Wisconsin. All the students were Hmong. Half of the students had some first-hand experience with early marriage (either themselves, family members, or friends). Gender distribution was equal: 25 males, and 25 females. The instrument, which was divided into four sections, was developed by the researcher to measure Hmong youth's attitudes towards early marriage. Section I gathered demographic information; section II used 24 items to assess the attitudes of Hmong youth towards early marriage. Section III used yes/no responses to determine the age range of marriage of Hmong youth in Menomonie Middle and High School; and Section IV identified attitudes towards marriage. Of the 50 questionnaires, 43 were completed and returned. The analysis of the data used descriptive statistics.

The ages of the students responding ranged in age from 12 to 21. Approximately 50 percent (or 22) students were females, and 48.8% (or 21) were males. Fourteen students (32.6%) were in middle school, and 29 (67.4%) were in high school. Two students (4.7%) were married, and 41 students (95.3%) were single.

The data in the study show a range of attitudes, but reveal that many of the young Hmong students surveyed are at odds with traditional Hmong marriage traditions. The

earliest age for marriage cited by students was 17, and the majority cited between 18 and 25 as the best age to marry, very different from the traditional age of 12-13 for girls and 15-17 for boys (Lee, 1997). Eighty eight percent of the respondents preferred to marry someone who is employed. That would vary greatly from Hmong tradition, as women were expected to stay at home and care for the children and home (Potter and Whiren 1982). The overwhelming majority felt that waiting at least until graduation from high school to marry was appropriate. The majority of students (N=37, 88.1%) reported they preferred a spouse who is employed. Five of the 24 items on "attitude" received a total group mean score above 8.0 on the scale, and the 5 most positive responses indicated they "want a mate who is easy to get along with" ( $\bar{x}$ = 8.209), "view marriage as a life long commitment" ( $\bar{x}$ = 8.279), "prefer to marry whenever I am ready" ( $\bar{x}$ = 8.209), " want someone assertive/honest/intelligent" ( $\bar{x}$ = 8.163), and " mate shows warmth/empathy/genuineness" ( $\bar{x}$ = 8.047).

In the "Feelings", Table 10, three items received a total group mean score of above 3.0 of a four point scale. The two most positive mean scores were number 8 which stated [I would be] "bothered to marry one without a high school diploma ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.279 ) and number 2 which stated " I [feel] that I have too many responsibilities marrying a person who has no education" ( $\bar{x}$ =3.116). Three items received a total group mean score below 2.0 on the four point scale. That which received the most negative response was number 7 which stated "marrying someone who has an education will lead to a power struggle" ( $\bar{x}$ =1.884).



Most of the respondents (88.1%) reported they prefer a spouse who is employed. The results also indicated that the majority of the Hmong youth surveyed knew what their own culture is important to them but they thought western culture is more prefer to accept. The students who lived in the United States longer have more positive attitudes toward the western marriage ceremony. Those who grew up in their home land and moved to the United States for a short time still prefer their own culture and marriage ceremony.

The study, which was to examine attitudes of Hmong youth in Dunn County toward early marriage and other traditional marriage customs, found significant variation. These were examined by age/grade level, and gender. Significant differences were revealed when broken down according to these categories. The respondents were middle and high school students between the ages 12-21. There were 22 girls and 23 boys who completed the survey. The Hmong youth surveyed demonstrate a gradual but definite move away from traditional Hmong marriage customs and practices, and towards more "Americanized" attitudes.

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter includes a summary of the study, the procedures used, limitations, method of data analysis, the conclusions drawn and recommendations for future research will drawn from the results.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the Hmong youth attitudes toward early marriage. This study also helped to determine attitudes toward early marriage of Hmong who were middle and high school students in Dunn County. The research objectives were to:

1. Examine attitudes of Hmong youth toward early marriage
2. Analyze attitudes toward marriage in relationship to age, grade level in school and gender.

This study was conducted in the late Fall 1997. Subjects for this study were 50 Hmong youth students randomly selected from Dunn County regarding their point of view toward early marriage.

Prior to the beginning of Spring 1997, the researcher had contacted with the Hmong American Community Association's Youth Counselor and asked to distribute the survey to the Hmong students who currently attended in Menomonie Middle and High School. A consent letter was sent to Hmong parents who had child/ren attending school and asked for permission of their son/daughter to participate in the study before the survey questions were distributed through the Hmong American Community

Association's Youth Counselor. Fifty survey instruments given to the participants and 43 were returned to the Counselor with completed information.

The instrument for the research consisted into four sections. Section I gathered demographic information. Section II used 24 Likert-type Scale items to assess the attitudes of Hmong youth toward early marriage. Section III used yes/no responses to determine the age range of marriage of Hmong youth in Menomonie Middle and High School. The final section identified attitudes toward marriage.

The responses of the survey were analyzed by the University of Wisconsin-Stout Computer User Support Services. Data from the survey were examined using frequencies, percents, means and standard deviations were computed in each item and calculated in section I, section II and section IV. T-test were also calculated on section I, section II and section IV of the questionnaire, using age to marry and gender as independent variables. Chi-square was calculated on section III.

Information regarding Hmong youth students was gathered. Twenty two students (51.2%) in this study were females and 21 students (48.8%) were males. The age of respondents ranged from 12 to 21. The grade level sampled ranged from middle and high school. Fourteen (32.6%) were in middle school and 29 (67.4%) were in high school. Of the 43 respondents, two students (4.7%) were married and 41 students (95.3%) were single.

The majority of the students cited between 18 and 25 as the best age to marry, while 4.7% cited the age of 17 and 2.3% cited the age of 26. Students reported the best age to marry was the age of 18 and 20 year old.

A significant difference at the .05 probability level was found between middle and high school students when "Feelings" questions (Table 11) were examined by grade level. Table 12 show significant difference between t-test results of age of respondent and attitudes toward marriage. On number 12 students 14 and younger ( $\bar{x}=8.0769$ ) agreed with the statement, "arrangement of marriage is not acceptable," as opposed to students ages 15+ ( $\bar{x}=6.5556$ ). The t-value was 2.06 with a probability level of .05. On number 18 students 14 and younger ( $\bar{x}=1.1538$ ) were less likely to feel that marriage is a game (one partner wins and the other loses) as opposed to students 15 and older ( $\bar{x}=2.0741$ ). There was a t-value of -2.04 with a probability of .05. For item number 20 students ages 14 and under were less worried "that I'm not attractive enough." ( $\bar{x}=3.0769$ ) than students 15 and older ( $\bar{x}=4.5185$ ). This trend had a t-value of -1.91 with a probability level of .064.

When the attitudes of girls and boys towards marriage were compared there were 5 significant differences. The males mean score was significantly higher ( $\bar{x}=6.000$ ) than females ( $\bar{x}=4.333$ ) on the item "I would like to marry and use an American ceremony." On number 9 ("I have difficulty understanding the Hmong tradition of marriage because I grew up in America") males mean score was 5.68 while females mean score was 4.09. Males ( $\bar{x}=7.7273$ ) had a significantly higher mean score than females ( $\bar{x}=6.1905$ ) regarding the item "the arrangement of marriage is not acceptable to me because I have my own rights." In the item "the marriage ceremony is one of the most important events in a person's life in my culture," males scored 7.90 as opposed to 6.80 for females. Females, however, scored significantly higher (mean 8.66) than males (mean 7.77) on the

item "I prefer to marry whenever I am ready." Similarly, on the item "It is important to marry someone who is approved by parents" males scored lower ( $\bar{x}=5.2727$ ) than females ( $\bar{x}=6.5714$ ). For the t-test which measured difference of attitudes by school level, middle school students ( $\bar{x}=7.8571$ ) were more positive about arranged marriages than high school students ( $\bar{x}=6.5517$ ).

### **Conclusions**

Most of those Hmong boys/girls who participated in this survey were preferred the western culture over their own culture. Those students with more education and for those who lived longer in the United States were more aware about the problems of early marriage and wanted to marry someone who is employed or graduated from high school and college.

The majority of the Hmong students preferred western culture and marriage customs rather than their own culture's approach to marriage. Most of the students who participated in this study hope to marry someone who has an education.

### **Recommendations**

A recommendation for further research concerning Hmong youth attitudes toward early marriage is to repeat this study with Hmong youth from across Wisconsin and Minnesota.

There are a number of educational implications based on this study.

1. The mainstream agencies which were providing outreach services should design more classes relate to early marriage to meet the needs of Hmong youth.

2. Professionals, agencies and the legal system needs to develop parenting classes and workshops to educate Hmong parents and their adolescent children.
3. Hmong parents should be educated regarding their young American/Hmong adolescents in regards to the different stages they go through as adolescents and what are their fears, hopes and dreams.
4. Another suggestion is for Hmong parents to be more involved with their children in planning for the rest of their life such as pursuing a higher education or career. Since Hmong parents play a major role in their children's lives, they also have a major part in encouraging educational achievements.

Thus, it is hoped that this study will prove helpful to the field of family study in addressing some of the challenges ahead, especially in view of the changing demographics of the Hmong-American

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**APPENDIX A**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is part of a study designed to explore the Hmong youth point of view toward marriage. Please answer ALL of the questions to the best of your ability. Be sure honest and sincere as possible in your response. Your answers will be treated as confidential.

I understand that by returning the questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am also aware that the information is being sought in a specified manner so that no identifiers are needed and confidentiality is guaranteed.

### SECTION I: General Information

Direction: Please place a mark (X) on the appropriate lines and specify information where necessary.

1. Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Age group:     Below 12 yrs                       17-18  
                       13-14                                       19-20  
                       15-16                                       21 and over
  
3. I am                       Female                       Male
  
4. Grade school:     Middle school     High school
  
5. Marital status:     Married                       Single                       Widow  
                                   Widower
  
6. If single, when would you decide to get married?  
 finished:     High school                       4 yrs degree  
                       Vocational                               Master degree or higher  
                       2 yrs degree                               Does not apply
  
7. If married, how long have you been married?  
                                   below 1 yr                       4-5 yrs  
                                   2-3 yrs                               6 and over
  
8. What age do you think is the best age to marry?  
                       13                       16                       19                       22                       25  
                       14                       17                       20                       23                       26  
                       15                       18                       21                       24                       27 and over
  
9. Would you prefer to be married to someone who is already employed?  
                                   Yes                       No

**SECTION II: Attitudes**

**Directions:** Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following possible vital functions of the attitude behavior toward marriage. Please choose a number from 1 to 9 by indicating whether you: Disagree Strongly, Slightly Disagree, Undecided, Slightly Agree and Strongly Agree on each of the statements:

If you strongly agree with the statements, choose number 9. If you strongly disagree, choose number 1. If you are undecided, choose number 5 and write that number on the correspondent line provided on the left of each question.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Disagree Strongly</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>		<b>Undecided</b>		<b>Slightly Agree</b>		<b>Agree Strongly</b>	

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I prefer to marry a person with a higher of level of education than I have.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I would prefer marrying a younger person who has no education at all.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. It is important to marry someone who is approved by my parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I want a mate who shows warmth, empathy, and genuineness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I want a mate who is easy to get along with.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Marrying someone who is mature and in control of themselves is important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. It is difficult to marry someone who I love because of the culture and value beliefs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I would like to marry and using an American ceremony.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I have difficulty understanding the Hmong tradition of marriage because I grew up in America.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I have to marry in case I do something wrong according to our culture and our traditional marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. My parents have no right to choose my mate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The arrangement of marry is not acceptable to me because I have my own rights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. An arranged marriages are a good idea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Marrying someone who is assertive, honest, and intelligent is important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Marrying someone who never had a sexual experience is important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I prefer marrying someone who is different from my own ethnic origin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I view marriage as a life long commitment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I view marriage as a game, one has to win and the other has to lose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I would elope if my parents wouldn't allow me to marry the one I love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I worry that I am not attractive enough for someone to want to marry me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. After the marriage ceremony, I prefer to live with my husband's family until I get a permission to establish my own family (refer to girl).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I prefer to bring my young wife to stay with my parents because of my traditional culture and value beliefs (refer to boy).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Disagree Strongly	Slightly Disagree		Undecided	Slightly Agree		Agree Strongly		

- \_\_\_ 23. The marriage ceremony is one of the most important events in a person's life in my culture.
- \_\_\_ 24. I prefer to marry whenever I am ready.

**Section III: Yes/No Response**

**Directions:** Read each statement about the age range of marriage. Circle Y for Yes or N for No, whichever you believe is true for you.

- Y N 1. Marrying between the age of 12 to 14 is too early.
- Y N 2. Marrying someone who is 26 and older is too old.
- Y N 3. I prefer to marry someone the age of 16 to 18.
- Y N 4. Marriage to a second cousin who I trust, is best for me.
- Y N 5. It is not a good idea to marry my second cousin because I consider that we are brother and sister.
- Y N 6. It's easy for me to come up with my own decision when I find someone who I love.
- Y N 7. I have many girlfriends/boyfriends but don't know which one is the right person to marry.
- Y N 8. I have talents and abilities therefore I would like to choose my own mate without parents consent.
- Y N 9. I believe that it is OK to marry between the ages of 14 to 18.
- Y N 10. I believe that marrying at a very young age in Hmong culture is due to the need of an additional member to help the parents in the home.

**Section IV:**

**Directions:** The statements below are influenced by your attitude toward marriage. Using the scale below with the numbers 1 to 4. Please read each statement and circle the response that applies to you.

1	2	3	4
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently

1. Feeling that I have too little authority by marrying a person who has a higher education than me.      1      2      3      4

1	2	3	4	
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	
2. Feeling that I have too many responsibilities by marrying a person who has no education.	1	2	3	4
3. If I marry someone with a higher education than myself I will feel I have lost power.	1	2	3	4
4. I feel that by marrying a person who has no education, I gain power and control.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel that by marrying a person who has an education, I gain power and value.	1	2	3	4
6. I feel that by marrying a person who has an education, I will not be a respected person in the family, I am bothered.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel that marrying a person who has an education, will lead to a power struggle between us, I am bothered.	1	2	3	4
8. Being married to a young person who has not completed high school diploma, I am bothered.	1	2	3	4
9. I am bothered by marrying someone who has never had a sexual experience.	1	2	3	4
10. I don't agree with Hmong culture which individuals to marry at a young age.	1	2	3	4
11. In traditional Hmong society, boys and girls were allowed to marry at a very young age, I am bothered.	1	2	3	4
12. It bothers me that Hmong parents in America make all the decisions for their children.	1	2	3	4

Your contribution and participation is very important to me. I really appreciate and thank you for your time.

**APPENDIX B**

**PARENTS CONSENT. LETTER**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that in the next couple of days, I am going to ask your child/ren to participate with my study. I am conducting a study to fulfill my master thesis at the University of Wisconsin- Stout. My topic is "Youth's Point of View Toward Marriage in the United States." I am asking your permission for your child/ren to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to determine the Hmong youth's point of view toward early marriage specifically in Dunn County. Since the Hmong Americans had fled to the United States in 1975, they have faced many problems between the Hmong parents and their children, especially the conflict in marriage. Working as a Family Strengthening Coordinator at the Hmong American Community Association, I have seen many Hmong youths who are married at young ages and the young couple face with tremendous stress and end with separation or divorce. Therefore, this study is to find out how the Hmong youths who are currently living in Dunn County, WI. feel toward their marriage life. This study is to get as much information about the attitude that the Hmong youths have and to find out the knowledge levels which will affect their decision to choose their mates in this modern society. The provided personal information in this study will be confidential. All information will be destroyed after the study is completed.

The 55-question survey will be distributed to your child/ren in class for one week so that he/she will have time to complete it. It will take approximately 10 to 20 minutes to answer all the survey questions.

-----  
cut and return this portion with the envelop provided

I, \_\_\_\_\_, affirm that I have read and understand the above statements and with my consent my child/ren will participate in your research study. Thank you very much for your time and support.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Txog covniam thiab covtxiv los yog tus saibxyuas:

Tsab ntawv no yuav sau tuaj qhia rau neb obtug uaniam uatxiv losyog tus saibxyuas haistias hnuvpuav tomntej no kuv yuav thov neb tus/cov metub losyog mentxhais pab kuv teb kuv daim ntawv soj ntsuam. Kuv yuav sau ib phau ntawv thaum kuv yuav kawmtiav rau qibsiab uas yog yuav tau txais kuv daim ntawv pov thawj (Master Degree) nyob rau lub tsev kawm ntawv qibsiab UW-Stout. Kuv phau ntawv yog yuav sojntsuam txog cov hluas txoj kev xav rau Hmoob txoj kev sibyuav. Yogli, kuv yuav thov neb obtug uaniam uatxiv losyog tus saibxyuas tso cai rau neb tus/cov me nyuam pab kuv teb kuv cov lus nug .

Lub ntsiab nyob rau kuv phauntawv yog yuav sautxog Hmoob cov tubhluas ntxhaislhuas uas nyob rau hauv ib cheebtsam ntawm lub nroog Menavmasnis txoj kev xav rau ntawm Hmoob txoj kev sibyuav. Txijli xyoo 1975 uas Hmoob tau tawg teb tawgchaws tuaj nyob rau lub tebhaws Memkuj, Hmoob tau ntsib teebmeem ntautsav ntauyam thiab muaj kev cuamtshuam hais txog ntawm kev sibyuav. Rawsli kuv tau ua haujlwm rau hauv lub koomtxoos Hmong American Community Association uas yog ua ibtug nrhiav kev kojqab haushuv, kuv pom ntautub tubhluas ntxhaishluas Hmoob tau sibyuav ntxovntxov thiab cov nkawm me niamtxiv hluashluas ntawd kuj raug teebmeem muaj kev nyuab siab thiab txog thaum kawg nkawv kuj tau sibcais losyog sibnrauj. Yoglintawd, kuv phauntawv no thiaj yuav sau mus nrhiavxyuas seb cov hluas tamsim no nyob rau hauv lub cheebtsam Menavmasnis no seb lawv ho xav licas rau lawv txoj kev sibyuav. Cov lus nug nyob rau hauv daimntawv sojntsuam no tsuas yog xav paub txog covhluas tus yamntxwv thiab kev xav haistxog ntawm kev sibyuav nyob rau lub neej tshiab tamsim no. Txhuayam uas tusneeg ntawd tauqhia rau hauv daimntawv sojntsuam no yuav ceev kom zoo, yuav tsispub rau leej twg pom thiab paub li. Tomqab lawv tau teb cov lusnug taslawd, cov ntaub ntawv lusnug ntawd yuav muab povtseg kom tag.

Cov lusnug muaj 55 kab lus. Kuv yuav muab rau neb tus/cov menyuam ib asthiv kom nws thiaj muaj sij hawm teb tag. Nws yuav siv li ntawm 10 mus rau 20 nasthis teb cov lusnug no.

---

txiav qhov nramqab no muab xa nrog lub hnabntawv muab tuaj nrog no rov rau kuv

Kuv yog, \_\_\_\_\_, ntseeg tias kuv tau twm thiab totaub txog cov xwmtxheej hais los saumtoj no thiab kuv zoo siab yuav tsocai rau kuv tus menyuam pab teb koj daimntawv. Uatshaug ntauntau rau koj lub sijhawm thiab koj lub siabdawb pab kuv.

Saunpe \_\_\_\_\_ Hnub \_\_\_\_\_



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